

Gender Construction and the Individual in the Work of Mona Caird

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a revisionary analysis of the work of Mona Caird, centred around her rejection of socially-determined gender construction. Caird's contention that the happiness of individuals and the continuing evolution of society depended on releasing both sexes from pressure to conform to artificial gender roles, rather than conformity to 'natural' gendered behaviour, means that she holds a distinctive position within late-Victorian debates about women's emancipation and post-war discussions about male violence and warfare.

Chapters 1 and 2 position Caird within social, literary, and critical contexts, establishing her fundamental belief in individual rights and analysing how her opinions shaped her challenges to the concept that biology decreed destiny. By contextualising Caird's ideas within debates on marriage reform and women's suffrage, as well as among New Woman writers who promoted emancipation through embracing 'natural' roles rooted in women's ability to reproduce, the thesis situates her within *fin de siècle* controversies while exploring how she diverged from the prevailing views of her time.

This study provides a foundation for the body chapters, which use Caird's fiction to demonstrate her arguments against, and alternatives to, gender construction. Chapter 3 examines her theories on the construction of the individual, focusing on the self-sacrifice demanded of both sexes, while chapters 4 and 5 analyse how the social demand to subdue the individual to the 'greater good' became tailored to ideals of femininity and masculinity. Chapter 4 studies Caird's rejection of woman's 'natural' roles, particularly her subordinate position to her husband, in favour of an 'ideal marriage' which allows women to remain free to develop as individuals. Chapter 5 examines her post-war analysis on the emphasis on violence in the construction of men, the cultivation of which leads to war and the potential annihilation of humanity. Ultimately, Caird reinterprets the idea that struggle leads to evolution, arguing instead that development can occur only when society gives free rein to the creative powers of the individual.

SIGNED DECLARATION

This thesis has been entirely written by myself, and is my own. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

The publication of my articles 'Breaking Out of the Cage: Mona Caird and her Reception in the Victorian Press' (Folio, 2004) and 'A Challenge to Victorian Motherhood: Mona Caird and Gertrude Atherton' (Women's Writing, 2005) was approved by my then-supervisor, Aileen Christianson. As required by university regulations (3.9.11 in the Postgraduate Studies Programme), copies of these articles are bound into this thesis as appendices. Permission has been obtained from the publishers.

Signature: _____

2/10/06

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ABBREVIATIONS

To avoid clogging up the text with repetition, the titles of Caird's novels and novella will be abbreviated after the first references:

<u>Whom Nature Leadeth</u> (1883)	WNL
<u>One That Wins</u> (1887)	OTW
<u>The Wing of Azrael</u> (1889)	WOA
<u>A Romance of the Moors</u> (1891)	AROTM
'The Yellow Drawing-Room' (1892)	YDR
<u>The Daughters of Danaus</u> (1894)	DOD
<u>Pathway of the Gods</u> (1898)	POTG
<u>The Stones of Sacrifice</u> (1915)	SOS
<u>The Great Wave</u> (1931)	TGW

Caird's collection The Morality of Marriage (1897) will be abbreviated as MOM, and the essays as follows:

- introduction	MOM/I
- 'The Emancipation of the Family'	MOM/EOF
- 'Marriage'*	MOM/M
- 'The Future of the Home'	MOM/FOH
- 'The Morality of Marriage'	MOM/MOM
- 'A Defence of the "Wild Women"'	MOM/DOWW
- 'Phases of Human Development'	MOM/PHD

*Caird's essays 'Marriage' (1888), originally published in the Westminster Review, and 'The Morality of Marriage' (1890), originally published in the Fortnightly Review, were republished in The Morality of Marriage in edited versions. To avoid confusion, the original versions will be referred to as 'Marriage' and 'Morality' respectively, and the later editions as MOM/M and MOM/MOM.

All other citations within the thesis are made in MLA style.

Introduction

Studying the life and work of Mona Caird offers the opportunity to bring an unjustly neglected writer out of near-obscure and to shed new light on her ideas of individual rights and the construction of gender. Caird's literary profile has received increased attention within the past thirty years, since the 'rediscovery' of New Woman writing by critics in the 1970s. She is no longer dismissed as a member of a homogenous group of mediocre writers who churned out 'problem novels' detailing the wrongs of women in the British *fin de siècle*, or as a social critic best known for her attacks on late-Victorian marriage. Instead, Caird's work has been integrated into modern discussions of the New Woman debates, most notably through the lenses of eugenics (Angelique Richardson), revisionist aesthetics (Ann Heilmann), and proto-modernism (Ann Ardis). This reinterpretation of Caird's novels and ideas has been part of a wider shift in literary studies, wherein New Woman writing has become defined within more complex matrices of value than those offered by a simplistic division between 'major' and 'minor' writers.¹

¹ In The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (1969), late nineteenth-century novelists are segregated as 'major' and 'minor' writers. The volume's editor makes no reference to this division other than to note that 'Major authors tend to be more minutely treated than minor' in the work (Watson xx). Thirty years later, in the revised edition of this bibliography, Joanne Shattock addresses the ways in which such a reference volume both affects and is affected by literary criticism's views on the construction of a literary canon: 'Any bibliography which aims to be comprehensive is inevitably implicated in the formation of a canon, however unofficially. The new entries and the revisions to this volume of CBEL have appreciably altered the existing nineteenth-century canon as well as reflecting the main focus of research over the last thirty years' (vii). Shattock's awareness of the position occupied by the bibliography, reflecting current standards of academia even as it helps to shape them, demonstrates an understanding that a canon must change when social, cultural, and literary contexts change. Although this

Yet the fact that Caird has gained a distinctive place within New Woman studies does not, in and of itself, justify her as the subject of a full-length thesis. There are, to borrow a phrase from Sally Mitchell, 'bucketfuls of forgettable novels' from the Victorian period,² and those hundreds of authors include many whose disinterment would contribute little to modern criticism. A quick glance at Caird's bibliography, or at one of the many error-riddled entries in biographical dictionaries of recent years,³ gives no particular indication why she should be exhumed while other writers of her time remain in obscurity.⁴ Closer study of her work, however, reveals that Caird's answer to the late-Victorian 'Woman Question' stemmed from a different root than that expounded by many of her contemporaries. By examining Caird's beliefs on this topic, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the complex arguments debated at the end of the nineteenth century. For instance, Caird's belief in the importance of allowing the natural character of the individual to develop, rather than to be subsumed into allegedly ingrained biological destinies, means that her approach to the emancipation of women

does not mean that literary value must be uncritically relativistic, such an approach allows for the active reconsideration of 'minor' writers.

² Personal conversation with Mitchell, September 2005.

³ Caird's year of birth has been incorrectly perpetuated as both 1855 and 1858 instead of the correct 1854 (the former may be due to a mistake in census records). John Sutherland contributed a serious error through his claim that Caird anonymously published the novel Lady Hetty: A story of Scottish and Australian life (1875), when it was in fact written by John Service (Longman 99). Another example is found in Paul and June Schlueter's An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers (rev. ed. 1998), which states that Caird wrote articles for the Daily Telegraph (116). Even Caird's entry in the Oxford Dictionary of Modern Biography (9: 461-62) suffers from basic errors in the names of titles and characters, as well as perpetuating the Lady Hetty claim (Service's entry gives a correct attribution). Such errors indicate that the lives of 'minor' women writers have been as subject to neglect as their novels. This thesis will provide footnotes for lesser-known New Woman writers, though it must be kept in mind that the information provided by secondary sources may vary.

⁴ Ann Ardis' New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism (1990) includes a bibliography of works which Ardis considers to be New Woman fiction, published between 1877-1920. This list (which remains the only attempt to date at producing a New Woman bibliography) indicates how many writers within this popular sub-genre remain unknown even within specialised literary criticism.

from conventional social roles differed radically from that of many other fin de siècle writers, as will be explored in chapter 2. Through bringing Caird's ideas into sharper focus, her work can be examined for its own sake in addition to prompting a reorientation of the ideas of her contemporaries within their wider literary context.

Although this thesis will examine Caird in a wider framework than that of New Woman writing, her critical context to date has been almost entirely within these boundaries. Prior to the 1970s, New Woman fiction was almost universally dismissed as second-rate propagandist literature written primarily by women.⁵ Early criticism focusing on New Woman writing began in the late 1970s, but initially had little room for Caird and other 'minor' female writers, focusing almost entirely on 'major' male writers while dismissing the bulk of New Woman fiction as woman-authored 'problem novels' lacking in artistic and aesthetic qualities. 'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel (1977) by Lloyd Fernando, for instance, concentrates on writers he considers to be 'the great British novelists of the period' (ix)—George Eliot, George Meredith, George Moore, George Gissing, and Thomas Hardy—writers who, while exploring the position of woman in the second half of the nineteenth century, were not primarily associated

⁵ Ernest A. Baker's ten-volume history of the English novel (1924-39) contains a chapter titled 'Some Women Novelists'. Baker assures the reader that to group female authors of a certain period by their gender is unproblematic from a critical perspective: 'Whatever variety of talent, outlook, or personal disposition may be discernible in any dozen women writers taken at random, it will be matched and probably outweighed by resemblances distinctively feminine' (10: 199). His discussion of 'The Problem Novel' is dismissive about the sub-genre as a whole: 'For they [the authors] narrowed their vision so as to see life as made up of problems, which is as much as to say that they reduced it to a series of abstractions. Fiction almost ceased in their hands to be an art concerned with the concrete material of the human world. They are, indeed, a phenomenon of social rather than literary history' (10: 213-14). Amy Cruse's more thoughtful examination in After the Victorians (1938) argues that many New Woman novelists 'poured out the rage and disgust that was in their hearts, and it is small wonder that much of what they wrote was neither artistic nor tending to edification' (126). Although Cruse falls back onto the 'little merit except as propaganda' argument (130), she convincingly demonstrates how authors may have sabotaged their own efforts by placing their personal or political struggles above art.

with the 'New Woman' debates.⁶ He acknowledges ideas of individual liberty primarily by noting their absence, arguing that T.H. Huxley's statements in 'Emancipation—Black and White' (1865), an essay which connected the liberation of women with the freedom of American slaves, were largely opposed until the turn of the century by traditionalists. Thus Fernando allows no opportunity for Caird's distinctively individualist views to be integrated into his conception of New Woman fiction. Instead, Fernando uses Caird only as a foil to such traditionalists as Eliza Lynn Linton, who argued that a woman's function is primarily maternal—a belief Caird questioned, in that it made women no different from any other domestic animal used for breeding purposes. Fernando ultimately accuses both Linton and Caird of '[falling] back on the familiar appeal to "nature," interpreting it to suit their purposes' (3). Even though Caird's viewpoint directly opposes that of Linton, Fernando fails to distinguish any nuances within their separate ideas.

Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (1977), arguably the most influential feminist work of the 1970s to

⁶ In particular, the reaction to Hardy's Jude the Obscure indicates the consistency with which critics attempted to protect him from being tainted by association with 'the Novel of the Modern Woman' (the phrase is W.T. Stead's). Margaret Oliphant, in 'The Anti-Marriage League' (1896), fights to segregate Hardy from categorisation alongside authors such as Grant Allen and Méné Muriel Dowie even while she despairs at Hardy's coarseness in Jude: 'There may be books more disgusting, more impious as regards human nature, more foul in detail, in those dark corners where the amateurs of filth find garbage to their taste; but not, we repeat, from any Master's hand' (138). The Athenaeum's reviewer joined in a general chorus of Jude as one of 'the bad books of great writers' (qtd. in Cox 249). Hardy himself considered Jude to be distinct from the category of 'problem novels': 'It is curious that some papers consider the story a sort of manifesto on the marriage question, though it is really one about two persons who, by a hereditary curse of temperament, peculiar to their family, are rendered unfit for marriage, or think they are. [...] Indeed, there is something bizarre in the tragedy of "Jude" coming out as the last fashionable novel' (Collected Letters 2: 94).

discuss New Woman novels,⁷ does single Caird out as an example of 'feminist writers' who 'hoped that men and women would liberate themselves together' (188). Showalter, however, generally believes New Woman writers (who she refers to as 'feminist novelists') deliberately wrote for sociological benefit, adapting the 'theory of female influence' to accommodate their social activism (184). By focusing so intently on a collective women's experience, Showalter loses sight of novels which were intended for aesthetic rather than social purposes, an issue Caird explicitly addresses (and rejects in her own work) in her introduction to The Wing of Azrael⁸ (WOA). The work of Fernando and Showalter, then, recognise Caird as a New Woman author but give little or no attention to the elements of her work which distinguish her from her contemporaries.

In the 1990s, several full-length works promoted New Woman fiction as a recognised and important topic, and began exploring the ways in which Caird's work played a significant role in this field. In addition, these studies offered closer readings of both her novels and her ideas. Ann Ardis' New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism (1990), Lyn Pykett's The Improper Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing (1992), and Sally Ledger's The New

⁷ Ellen Moers' 1976 Literary Women does not mention New Woman fiction in any detail, nor does Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic (1979), although a shift in attention is indicated from their discussion of New Women in the second volume of No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (Sexchanges, 1989). A further re-evaluation is evident in Showalter's revised introduction to the 1999 revised edition of A Literature of Their Own, in which she indicates that she has moved beyond her original, dismissive conclusions and reinterpreted the 1890s 'as a transitional period for women's writing' (xxvii).

⁸ Caird's novels are Whom Nature Leadeth (1883), One That Wins (1887), The Wing of Azrael (1889), The Daughters of Danaus (1894), The Pathway of the Gods (1898), The Stones of Sacrifice (1915), and The Great Wave (1931). Caird's novella is A Romance of the Moors (1891) and her short story 'The Yellow Drawing-Room' (1892). For ease of reading, after the first reference, her fiction will be referred to by the abbreviations listed in the front matter. Caird's short story 'For Money or for Love' (1889) will not be discussed; while an engaging story of blackmail, revenge, and secret tunnels in a Scottish estate, it does not offer any relevant contributions to the thesis.

Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle (1997) began establishing boundaries for the New Woman novel⁹ and exploring the roles these novels played within literary and cultural developments. Ardis posits that New Woman fiction was the precursor to modernism, placing WOA alongside Olive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm (1883) and contenting that both authors questioned the ways in which they could 'dismantle both the predictability and the "puppetry" of nineteenth-century realism' (68). Pykett draws connections between two sets of marginalised nineteenth-century 'women's fiction' — New Woman fiction and sensation novels of the 1860s. She considers Caird to be emulating sensational fiction's attention to 'the constraining and claustrophobic nature of the domestic space', but moving beyond this goal into a period-specific 'indictment of the covert tyranny of the ideology of self-sacrificial motherhood' (146). Ledger, offering insights into the figure of the New Woman as a cultural as well as a textual phenomenon and an active participant in contemporary discourse, associates Hadria, heroine of The Daughters of Danaus (DOD), with the 'modernity' which Caird and other writers themselves put forward as evidence of their 'advanced' status (27).

⁹ The heterogeneity of the works is a double-edged sword, making the sub-genre a vibrant, multi-faceted category, but also difficult to define. In general, critics seem to have taken the same reductive approach provided by Damon Knight's famous definition: 'Science fiction is what I mean when I point at it' (qtd. in James Gunn 71). Critics of the New Woman appear to believe that if they include a text within an examination of New Woman fiction, then the text must be New Woman fiction. The clearest examination to date of the definition of New Woman fiction comes from Talia Schaffer, who notes that those who 'include any authors with gender interests under the New Woman aegis or view "women writers" and "New Women" synonymously' succeed in bringing many forgotten authors back into the fold of scholarly criticism, but risk 'stretching the term so far as to make it almost useless for identificatory purposes' (10). Drawing on the theories of Ann Ardis, Schaffer uses theories of political engagement to define these novels as having 'strong, clear opinions about women's roles'; this methodology allows anti-feminist novels to be incorporated into the category (14). It should be noted, however, that Ardis' definition — which takes the approach that New Woman novels have an 'agenda' (30) — fails to allow for novels which are interested in telling a story about New Women without bringing 'opinions about women's roles' into the forefront.

Caird's position was, therefore, beginning to be drawn out from the mass of her contemporaries.

In the past five years, study of Caird has not only increased beyond the work offered by these critics, but she has become even more closely attended to as a writer with distinctive ideas. Angelique Richardson's article "'People Talk a Lot of Nonsense about Heredity': Mona Caird and Anti-Eugenic Feminism' in The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms (2001) not only foregrounds Caird, examining her fiction and non-fiction within historical and eugenic contexts, but acknowledges the ways in which 'Caird's late-twentieth-century reputation has thus been determined by what has been a largely homogenizing response to the New Woman' (187). Richardson notes, for instance, that modern critics have frequently linked Caird with Sarah Grand, even though Caird herself distanced her ideas about motherhood and race from those of Grand. Richardson also explores the ways in which Caird has accused of sharing racist beliefs, dismissing this as another example of the lack of attention paid to Caird's ideas. While the volume's introduction (written by Richardson and Chris Willis) contends that 'many New Women wanted to achieve social and political power by reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role', Caird's views are acknowledged not to follow this conventional line of argument (9). The ability to distinguish Caird's ideas on these subjects is a significant step towards establishing the importance of Caird's position.

Finally, the recent work of Ann Heilmann elevates Caird to the level of the New Woman writers deemed central to the field. In her most recent book, New Woman

Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird (2004),¹⁰ Heilmann draws individualism and the construction of gender into her arguments, using Caird's work to define how these areas were explored in the broader field of New Woman fiction. She acknowledges that in Grand's novel The Heavenly Twins (1893), 'Angelica's and Evadne's stories conjointly illustrate the need for women's active and continued resistance to gender-role expectations if they want to survive as individuals', noting that marriage crushes this individuality even though Grand promotes marriage as the ideal state for a woman (65). She goes on to cite this theme in the beginning of her close study of Caird, who in Heilmann's view 'asserted [...] that self-denial amounted to no less than self-destruction and was certain to inflict incalculable harm on the collectivity as it generated and fuelled an endless cycle of oppression' (158). Caird's essential argument that 'no free and egalitarian society could be built over the bodies of individuals' provides Heilmann with the basis for her discussion of the way in which Caird revises 'classical and modern myth in order to dismantle the foundation stories which defined women as objects of exchange [...] and bodies for slaughter' (158). Heilmann's position both indicates the inclusion of Caird into the critical arena and the legitimacy of using her position on individualism and gender construction as the foundation for a longer study.

The thesis will begin by establishing Caird's historical and philosophical position on the importance of the individual, the nature of gender construction, and the

¹⁰ See, for instance, Teresa Mangum's Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel (1998) and Carolyn Burdett's Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire (2001). Caird has not yet been the sole subject of a published work; this thesis is the first full-length study of her work.

evolutionary theories which provide a framework for her own vision of the development of humanity. Wendy McElroy's work on individualist feminism of the nineteenth century provides a historical context for Caird's position, while the theories of John Stuart Mill provide an intellectual position from which to develop Caird's approach, which emphasises social adaptation over Mill's favoured legal changes. Chapter 2 discusses how Caird's development of Mill's ideas made her a distinctive voice within New Woman debates, in particular by challenging beliefs that claimed a woman's biology was the rationale for her inherently gendered position in society. Caird is located within her own social contexts (such as debates about marriage reform) as well as in contrast with her literary contemporaries. Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the body of the thesis, use her novels and essays to explore her beliefs about how the individual is constructed by society and how, instead, the individual should be allowed to develop naturally—a circumstance which Caird believed would assist the continued evolution of society. Chapter 3 focuses on the social demand for sacrifice, while chapters 4 and 5 integrate that demand into Caird's arguments on the construction of the two sexes into 'inherently' gendered beings.

Through chapter 4, which analyses Caird's views on the gender construction of women, the thesis arguably continues the development of the concept of 'Caird as a New Woman writer'. This would be an eminently appropriate position to take in relation to the author and her work, given that Caird was grouped in her own time with other authors who wrote 'novels of revolt',¹¹ and that her modern 'disinterment' has been

¹¹ See, for instance, W.T. Stead's 'The Book of the Month: The Novel of the Modern Woman' (1894).

exclusively conducted within New Woman studies and the culture of the fin de siècle.¹²

That this has historically been an appropriate placement for Caird is evident from the range of her work: between 1883 and 1898, she published five novels, a novella, two short stories, and several essays on marriage, all of which highlight the position of woman in modern society. After the turn of the century, Caird's productivity declined and her emphasis shifted; she continued to publish letters and essays (her anti-vivisection work is discussed in chapter 3, and her pacifism in chapter 5), but she wrote only two further works of fiction. While Caird's 1915 novel, The Stones of Sacrifice (SOS), shares direct links to her New Woman writing, her 1931 novel, The Great Wave (TGW)—in spite of a plot which begins in the 1890s—is thematically as well as chronologically distinct from her earlier work. Most obviously, while the novel's use of female emancipation is present as a grace note to the hero's development, the plot emphasises the way in which men are constructed by society. It would be easy—almost automatic—to focus on Caird's nineteenth-century work, with a nod to the ways in which her pre-war contributions develop these themes, and dismiss TGW as an anachronism too far removed to be integrated.

To set aside TGW, however, would undermine one of the organising principles of this thesis: that Caird was concerned not simply with the social status of women, or even with ensuring that both sexes gained freedom from artificial gender roles, but with equal rights and the development of humanity as a whole. As will be shown in chapter

¹² Talia Schaffer, for instance, briefly discusses Caird's use of epigrams in her work on female aestheticism—though even here, defines Caird within 'feminist or New Woman novels' (57). Lisa A. Surridge's Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction (2005) has a chapter on The Wing of

4, her vision for the emancipation of women required not simply that women had the freedom to develop into 'New Women' but that they would redefine marriage — a goal which required 'New Men'. While her Victorian work does not pay close attention to the ways in which men are socially constructed, Caird's views were already developing along these lines (most specifically in WOA) in ways that would ultimately lead her to focus on them.

To address only Caird's female characters and their attempts to escape gender construction, ignoring the parallel struggle of her primary male protagonist, would provide only a partial understanding of the importance of these issues to Caird's work. Such an approach would inflexibly position women as the 'other', placed against the dominant category of men. As Simone de Beauvoir famously described, woman becomes 'the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being' (1407). One of Caird's central arguments is that women and men are 'fellow human being[s]' rather than two different types of beings who by their sexual and gendered natures are essentially distinct. It therefore seems both appropriate and illustrative to structure a thesis about her work in such a way as to remain faithful to her deepest beliefs, even though this complicates the structure of the thesis (for instance, by placing more emphasis in chapters 1 and 2 on Caird's approach to women, with which she was concerned for the greater part of her career).

The structure of this thesis means that Caird cannot fit neatly into an existing definition of 'New Woman writer' or 'first-wave feminist'. She is both, but she also

Azrael, within a book that covers the span of Victorian fiction (including works by Charles Dickens, Anne Brontë, George Eliot, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), but this work was not available for consultation.

falls outwith the strict boundaries these categorisations imply. Caird's definition as 'feminist' can legitimately claim that her approach to feminism encompasses a set of opinions and actions that are expressed in the social world, centring around the position of women but far from restricted to them. Studying Caird's complete oeuvre allows her to be recognised for the first time as a writer whose concerns, while integrally associated with New Womanhood, also addressed the ways in which relationships between men and women, and their mutual development as equal halves of humanity, could be strengthened through emphasis on their individuality and need for greater independence from artificial gender roles.

Chapter 1: Caird's historical and philosophical contexts

Caird's theories are rooted in a belief that the rights of the individual are superior to those of larger social organisms—the family, society, and the race—and that social evolution is possible only through allowing individuals to develop freely. The specific issues which this thesis will examine in regard to Caird's individualistic approach are her arguments that society trains both sexes to conform to externally-mandated gendered identities, rather than allowing them to develop as autonomous individuals, and that forcing individuals to mould themselves to specific models is not only an attenuation of their fundamental rights as individuals, but causes harm by trapping all members of society within rigid identities. Understanding the significance of gender construction as a barrier to the development of the individual is key to interpreting Caird's position. Her model of gender identity rejects essentialist theories based on biological sex; it also denies that the individual must sublimate personal inclinations in order to conform to socially gendered identities.

Caird's approaches to individualism and gender construction are heavily influenced by thinkers of the mid-century period, most notably John Stuart Mill. She can also be placed within a tradition of nineteenth-century individualist feminism. Examining her intellectual influences and the ways in which she integrates her individualist theories into an evolutionary model helps to explain why her theories differ so greatly from the ideas of her contemporaries, and why the concepts she puts forth as the foundations of a stronger future were felt by many to be degenerative. This chapter

will provide a platform for the body chapters by establishing the ways in which Caird developed the ideas which would form the foundation for her work, and by contextualising her within historical and theoretical positions.

Historical and philosophical contexts: the Enlightenment, Mill, and feminism

'My views were pronounced at an early age. John Stuart Mills [sic], I think, was the first to help me to bring these thoughts and feelings into form by his writings. Shelley, also, had a strong influence over me,¹³ and the modern scientific writers, Tyndall, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and, of course, Darwin.' ('Interview: Mrs. Mona Caird' 421)¹⁴

Caird's approach to individualism and gender construction derives in large part

¹³ Caird does not indicate whether she means Mary Shelley or Percy Bysshe Shelley, and either might have influenced her thought. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a rebellious poet whose promotion of personal liberty might well have resonated with Caird; he was described by Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling in 1888 as adhering to the belief 'that man and woman should be equal and united' (12). In her final novel, Caird uses his poetic skylark as a metaphor for the unbounded heights of which humanity is capable (TGW 97). However, the fact that Caird places 'Shelley' in her list as an immediate predecessor to 'modern scientific writers' hints that she may be thinking in a different direction—that Mary Shelley's investigation of man's diabolical ability to create human life in Frankenstein (1818) might have informed Caird's final novel, TGW, in which a scientist wrestles with the ethical implications of creating nearly unlimited physical power. She directly refers to this work in her article 'A Defence of the Wild Women' (1892), noting that Eliza Lynn Linton's crusades against the figure of the 'wild woman' leads her to a binary in which there is 'no medium between Griselda and a sublimated Frankenstein's monster'; the latter represents those who are 'bad, ugly, rebellious, ill-mannered, ungenerous, foolish, and liberty-demanding' (MOM/DOWW 161).

¹⁴ This litany of thinkers, listed in an 1890 interview, indicates that during her formative years (between the mid-1860s and mid-1870s—her teenage years through her marriage), Caird familiarised herself with the central scientific and cultural issues of her day. John Tyndall (1820-93) was a professor of natural philosophy whose research fields included meteorology, molecular biology, and physics. According to his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, Tyndall 'did perhaps more than any other person of his time for the diffusion of scientific knowledge' (Lee 19: 1362). Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-95) worked in morphology and biology, and was a proponent of 'scientific methods of investigation' (Lee 22: 903). The theories of Mill (1806-73), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and Charles Darwin (1809-82), in relation to their significance to Caird's ideas, will be discussed throughout the thesis.

from Rationalism, which took as its foundation the belief that 'human desire and conduct are guided by the intellect' (Kors 3: 405). In her essays, Caird applies 'observation and research directed to the subject' in order to analyse the ways in which social institutions and scientific advancement have led to the attitudes promoted in her own period (MOM/I 14). As she explains in the introduction to her 1897 collection of essays, she intends logically to show the ways in which 'misdirection of the mighty forces of heredity, education, habit, which have brought us disaster, might have led us, (had they been directed wisely), and may still lead us, to victory' (MOM/I 3).

Throughout her work, she uses the language of science to emphasise the need for rationality and clear-sighted interpretations in order to judge society's problems and improve them: 'any one who has observed carefully knows how grateful a response the human organism gives to improved conditions,' she notes in her first published article, 'Marriage' (199). She establishes science, particularly its ability to clarify social conditions, as the reason why advancement is able to take place in her own time,¹⁵ noting in 'Marriage' that the progression of science means that humanity is 'no longer entirely blind', and has become able to direct its own development rather than being swept along 'like dead leaves on a gale' (200).¹⁶ Rationalism, therefore, is a useful starting point for grounding Caird in her philosophical ideas, and for demonstrating that

¹⁵ The protagonist of 'The Yellow Drawing-Room' (YDR) tells his story in an attempt to 'throw off this absurd spell by calmly smoothing out the ruffled memories and studying them scientifically' (21). Though unable to resolve his feeling of being 'unhinged' by an unconventional woman (21), he does come to recognise his own limitations as 'a sort of abortive creature, striding between two centuries' (30)—an incarnation of the type of clarity that a rational scientific approach could provide. (That he is unable to understand Vanora's desire to make her drawing-room yellow is implied to be the fault of the part of himself which continues to represent the eighteenth century, rather than a drawback of science.)

her answers to the questions she poses are based on an ability to analyse social and religious structures of her time through the lenses of logic and scientific enquiry.

Unlike earlier Rationalist thinkers such as René Descartes (1596-1650) and Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), Caird is not specifically concerned with debates about the nature of existence. It could be argued that she integrates into her work conflicts between reason and experience; a character such as Hadria in DOD, for instance, rationally understands the unfairness of the restrictions which have been placed upon her, but finds that her experience of growing up within those restrictions makes her unable to free herself from her illogical situation. Hadria continues to express her 'duty' to her family even while her intellectual reason indicates that she ought to act differently. However, Caird's approach most clearly derives from the same model as that of a later Rationalist, the Scottish empiricist David Hume (1711-1776), 'who brought reasoned criticism to bear on social, political, and religious institutions and practices'; although Hume and other philosophers with similar ideas would not necessarily cite 'reason as a sense-independent faculty of mind', they 'might contrast reason with revelation, or with political authority not founded on "rational" principles' (Kors 3: 396). Hume, in the introduction to A Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40), made clear his position by denouncing the rejection of philosophical reasoning in favour of 'principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduced from them' (2). Defining Caird within such a tradition offers a clearer scope for positioning her ideologically, as throughout her work she rejects social demands which are founded on what she

¹⁶ However, science in and of itself is not the cure for society's problems, as it can be misused—a situation which comes to a head in TGW, in which scientific discovery is explicitly as a double-edged sword

considers illogical interpretations. For instance, in DOD she uses a wedding as an example of a ceremony which is expected to act as a demarcation for woman's 'natural' instinct for maternity. Before the wedding, it would be considered as 'unnatural' for the woman to desire children as it would subsequently be 'unnatural' for her to reject them: 'So we are all to be horribly shocked at the presence of an instinct to-day, and then equally shocked and indignant at its absence to-morrow; our sentiment being determined by the performance or otherwise of the ceremony we have just witnessed' (255). The ceremony itself being a social act, it can have no relation to an 'innate' physical instinct. For Caird, this illogic proves that the 'instinct' for motherhood is not a biological function—as so many of her contemporaries claimed—but rather a socially-constructed demand which has been artificially linked to biology in order to conform to a specific social requirement.

The marriage ceremony in Caird's period was both a social and a religious institution; for Caird, it represented the Christian belief that upheld the 'nature' of women as designed to fulfil a single function. In 'Marriage', she pins particular blame on Martin Luther for his insistence that, in her words, 'woman had no recognized claims whatever; she was not permitted to object to any part in life that might be assigned her; the notion of resistance to his decision never occurred to him—her rôle was one of duty and of service' (191). Caird considers Luther's stance to be the root of the nineteenth-century construction of womanhood: that woman is by her nature submissive and self-abnegating, existing primarily to fulfil her animalistic function of maternity, and that this role originally assigned to her by a religious interpretation has become her expected

capable of both saving and destroying the human race.

position within Christian society.¹⁷ The result of Luther's intervention (particularly through the introduction of 'a strict marriage system') leads, in Caird's view, to the peculiar power of the wedding ceremony: namely, that the wedding itself 'make[s] the whole difference between terrible sin and absolute duty' (192). Although Caird, in line with the literary conventions of her time, does not overtly discuss sexual matters, she touches upon the abuses that result from codified male dominance and female submissiveness (specifically, marital rape, as will be shown with regards to WOA); in her arguments about marriage and the position of women, she uses the ceremony's demarcation of lawful sexuality and immoral lust to demonstrate that the position of women is based on a particular interpretation of religion, one which is used to justify artificial concepts of appropriate feminine behaviour.¹⁸

Two of the writers referred to in the quotation that begins this chapter made clear statements about the benefits of supporting the rights of the individual, specifically addressing the rights of women—concepts integral to Caird's own work. T.H. Huxley's 1865 essay 'Emancipation—Black and White' draws connections between the slavery of Negroes and the position of women. While Caird does not agree with Huxley's belief that female education is 'inherently absurd', her ideas have an affinity with his conclusion that the way to solve the 'woman question' is to 'emancipate girls.

¹⁷ Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Merry E. Weisner-Hanks' sourcebook on Luther's statements about women indicate his belief that 'women's anatomy bespoke their destiny as mothers rather than thinkers' (10). This, in Luther's terms, follows directly from Eve's fall: 'the punishment, that she is now subjected to the man, was imposed on her after sin and because of sin' (26). To Luther, women have a natural God-given character from which emerges their position in society: 'Women are accustomed to bearing and bringing up children, they administer the household, they are inclined to be merciful. They have been made by God to bear children, to delight men, to be merciful' (28).

Recognise the fact that they share the senses, perceptions, feelings, reasoning powers, emotions, of boys, and that the mind of the average girl is less different from that of the average boy, than the mind of one boy is from that of another' (72). The emancipation of women, like that of the Negro, is for Huxley a matter of allowing the enslaved group to rise to their own natural level instead of being placed in a pre-determined position. When this occurs, they will be 'relieved from restraints imposed by the artifice of man, and not by the necessities of Nature' (68). The particular result for women, in Huxley's view, is that 'they will find their place, and it will neither be that in which they have been held, nor that to which some of them aspire' (73). While Huxley is clearly pessimistic in his opinion of women and their potential accomplishments, believing that their biological ability for motherhood makes them 'fearfully weighted in the race of life', this does not prevent him from acknowledging that they must be allowed to determine their roles for themselves; it is most important that this not be hindered by society, 'that not a grain is piled upon that load beyond what Nature imposes; that injustice is not added to inequality' (75).

Caird's most important intellectual influence, both for his belief in individual rights and the way in which he applies this concept to women, is John Stuart Mill. Her work bears a considerable debt to his ideas, particularly his belief that freedom is inherently better than restriction and that this idea should be the foundation of all relationships, both personal and social. Mill's opening statement in The Subjection of Women (1869) makes clear his fundamental argument: 'That the principle which

¹⁸ Although Christian attitudes towards duty and sacrifice clearly inform her arguments against the enforced roles of women, there is no evidence that Caird herself suffered from a Victorian crisis of faith.

regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other’ (471). This statement indicates a limit to Mill’s theories, in that his emphasis on ‘legal subordination’ implies a concern with the subjection of married women. Although Caird’s ideas for full emancipation reached their culmination in equal marriage, her fiction also explores ways through which unmarried women can reap the advantages of equality.

Barbara Caine sees Mill’s limitation to married women as a severe attenuation of the possibilities he might have achieved with mid-nineteenth-century feminism: ‘Mill’s omission of these questions immediately separates him from most of the women involved in the women’s movement. For them, the plight of single women was of the utmost importance’ (36). Mill’s focus on married women could not, for instance, make his ideas wholly applicable to the issues addressed by social campaigners such as Josephine Butler, who in the late 1860s wrote about the increasing number of unmarried working women. Because Butler believed in an ‘essential’ womanhood which would express itself no matter whether women remained in domestic shelter or moved into the public sphere,¹⁹ she concluded that the belief that ‘woman’s sphere is the home’ had

or that her rejection of Christian tenets masked a deeply personal ambivalence towards religion.

¹⁹ Writing in support of women’s employment, Butler argued that opening the workplace to women would not, indeed could not, alter womanhood; those who thought it might ‘do not know how strong Nature is, how true she is for the most part, and how deeply the maternal character is rooted in almost all women, married or unmarried: they are not, therefore, likely to see that when a better education is secured to women [...] they will become the more and not the less womanly’ (*Education* 18).

become, ‘in the face of the great facts of society as they lie confessed before us, [...] to a great extent wholly inapplicable’ (Woman’s Work xxviii). However, although Mill’s focus on the limitations of married women reduces the potential relevance of his ideas, his opening statement serves as a useful platform from which to examine both his views and Caird’s responses to them. He specifically includes women in his demands for equality, whereas he had previously expressed this idea in less specific terms: ‘The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign’ (On Liberty 14). Married women were far from sovereign; that their position needed a specific discussion by Mill indicates an awareness that their legal and social restrictions gave them a status—in Mill’s rhetoric—worse than that of slaves.²⁰

Both Mill and Caird derive their concept of the sexes from Enlightenment thought, in which ‘universalistic claims made for human liberty and equality [...] did not inherently exclude the female half of humanity’ (Laqueur 194). Such claims did not, however, necessarily deny that ‘the female half of humanity’ differed in fundamental ways from the male half. That difference, according to Thomas Laqueur, indicated a shift in thinking from the medieval belief that men and women were one sex. In that model, women were lesser men, complete with inverted sex organs, and as such constituted as ‘a version of [...] a generally unproblematic, stable male body’ (22). The two-sex model which developed between the Enlightenment and the twentieth century

²⁰ Mill did not mince words about this analogy: ‘I am far from pretending that wives are in general no better treated than slaves; but no slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word, as

offered ‘sex-determinant characteristics of male and female bodies’ which influenced the development of the nineteenth-century ‘separate spheres’ ideology (193). The inherent difference which became recognised between the sexes helped pave the way for women ‘to write or take public action or make any other claims for themselves as women’ (197). This model offered a fundamental belief in biological difference which influenced how women should be perceived by men—as well as how they perceived themselves and their rightful position in the social body.

Mill and Caird were not denying the existence of biological differences between the sexes; however, they refused to believe that those differences should have any effect on the ways in which women and men interacted with each other and participated in their society, and rejected the idea that sex-based characteristics should determine social position. In this, they differed from Enlightenment thinkers who promoted a ‘different-but-equal’ argument. The example most relevant to the status of women comes from Mary Wollstonecraft, who in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) argued for women’s equality not because women were the same as men, but on the grounds of their difference. For Wollstonecraft, emancipation should improve the ability of women to better fulfil their ‘natural’ roles, rather than to ‘invert the order of things’ (109).

Successfully accomplished, equality for women would not set them in opposition to men, but strengthen their ability to be women: ‘Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens’ (269). Both the relationship between the

a wife is’ (504).

sexes and the health of society will be improved when women are able to take up their specifically gendered position, which Wollstonecraft saw as immutable. Women were equal citizens, but equality did not mean that their responsibilities were the same as those held by men. Biological difference in itself did not make women ineligible for the rights granted to men, but neither could difference be ignored or set aside.

Although Wollstonecraft's direct contributions to nineteenth-century feminism were largely concealed,²¹ the importance of sexual difference became a dominant theme in establishing the place of women in the social body. In the 1830s, the highly influential writer Sarah Stickney Ellis placed a discussion on the education of children within this context:

And after all, for what are women intended, and for what ought they to be prepared? Men have their appropriate place in creation, and women have theirs. It is absurd to compare them as being superior or inferior on either side; or to say that in one there is more mental capability required than in the other. But it must still be of a different order, and directed to different purposes, otherwise the whole structure, the harmonious working, the happiness, and the beauty of our social constitution would be destroyed. (Education 17).

For women to remain in their sphere, according to Ellis, is both decreed by nature and

²¹ Wollstonecraft's reputation was, at best, tenuous. Barbara Caine argues that to many Victorian feminists, Wollstonecraft represented the 'undermining [of] the most earnest feminist attempts to insist on their respectability and propriety' (262); the result was a nearly universal refusal to cite her ideas. Caine's theory is strengthened by the fact that *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was republished in Britain only once before 1891; Janet Todd's 1976 annotated bibliography of works by and about Wollstonecraft notes that this 1844 edition is 'heavily edited' (54). However, Todd's work also shows that Wollstonecraft's ideas did have cultural currency throughout the period, as indicated by references in biographies and memoirs of the time, including those of William Befoe (1817), William Ellery Channing (1848), Benjamin Silliman (1866), and Harriet Martineau (1877). Towards the end of the century, Wollstonecraft was not only recovered but acknowledged as an important part of a tradition of feminism; for instance, Catherine J. Hamilton includes her in the preface to her 1892 collection of biographical sketches of women writers: 'They are the pioneers of the numerous authoresses of the present day. [...] Mary Wollstonecraft was battling for the rights of her sex, Mrs. Barbauld and Hannah More were writing

essential for the smooth working of the social body. Barbara Caine notes the continued importance of this concept in the mid-century feminist movements: 'Victorian feminists were in no doubt about the gendered nature of the public sphere or of the extent to which this gendering made it not only unresponsive to women's needs, but actively hostile to women. They showed this quite easily by introducing a female perspective into the discussion of politics and of the nature of the political order' (40). Butler, for instance, in defending woman's entry into the public sphere, emphasised that her essential difference could not possibly allow her to be altered by her new circumstances: 'the woman is strong in almost every woman; and it may be called an infidelity against God and against the truth of nature to suppose that the removal of unjust restrictions, and room given to breathe freely, and to do her work in life without depression and without bitterness, will cause her to cast off nature' (Education 18). By accepting feminine qualities in the public sphere, Butler contends, society would be enhanced without any danger of women themselves becoming changed.

This 'female perspective', which played such a significant role over the course of the century, strengthened arguments that the two sexes were fundamentally different, not only in biological function but in their resultant outlook and perspective. However, this ideology is seen by Caird as restricting women to one section of life while men are allowed to search among a variety of options to find their own preferences. In 'A Defence of the "Wild Women"' (1892), her rebuttal of Eliza Lynn Linton's castigations

poems, Joanna Baillie was composing tragedies, and Fanny Burney was sharpening her satirical little pen' (vi).

of women who reject their 'natural' sphere,²² Caird points out the imbalance which results from placing gender-based restrictions on the activities women can pursue: 'To man, the gods give both sides of the apple of life; a woman is sometimes permitted the choice of the halves,—either, but not both' (MOM/DOWW 819).²³ As she showed in her early portrayal of Leonore in Whom Nature Leadeth (WNL), a woman can only succeed in her chosen endeavour by rejecting maternity and domesticity. To attempt to pursue both leads only (in the current social climate) to social disapprobation and personal despair.

Although, as set out in the introduction, this thesis is not restricting Caird to a definition of 'feminist', her ideas clearly place her within a context of recognisable feminist concepts. As defined by Claire Colebrook, first-wave feminism 'remains committed to the idea of equal and rational subjects who all have the right to be considered human. Gender representation, on this argument, should either be done away with or refigured to include women within the norms of reason' (19). Acknowledging this tradition's roots in Enlightenment thought, Colebrook notes that the use of reason within first-wave feminism is not 'the recognition of one's proper essence in the divine scheme of things' but rather 'the refusal of any natural or pre-given determination'

²² Linton wrote three articles on this theme, all published in the Nineteenth Century in 1891 and 1892: 'The Wild Women as Politicians', 'The Wild Women as Social Insurgents', and 'The Partisans of the Wild Women'. Her basic premise is that the 'wild women', while biologically female, are 'unnatural' women because 'they have not "bred true"—not according to the general lines on which the normal woman is constructed' ('Politicians' 79). Both mentally and physically, they suffer from 'a curious inversion of sex' which indicates their failure to develop properly (79). Linton therefore takes the concept of an essential female biology and links it to a theory of evolution which places 'wild women' on a lower rung of development than 'true' women who accept their natural position of motherhood and domesticity.

²³ This is the text of the version published in The Morality of Marriage; the original article states that 'woman is offered the choice of the halves'—perhaps indicating a growing pessimism on Caird's part between the original publication in 1892 and the revised version in 1897 (819).

(145). Both of these descriptions encompass Caird's approach, and as the thesis will show in the next chapter, it was not an approach taken by other significant New Woman writers, whose beliefs more closely resembled those of second-wave feminism, in which 'gender stereotypes give way to an authentic and autonomous female sex' (146). Such a definition of sex, in contrast to first-wave arguments, foregrounded maternity and a distinct sphere of activity as women's natural position. New Woman writers such as Grant Allen therefore supported ways of ensuring that women could pursue their 'natural' roles, arguing that women were happiest and society strongest when this happened. Caird's rejection of pre-determined roles based on sex therefore places her in direct opposition to those 'problem novelists' with whom she was grouped.

Historically, Caird can be linked to movements of individualist feminism. According to Wendy McElroy, this tradition 'is based on natural law theory and on the derivative belief that all human beings are sovereign, or self-owners' (1). The American tradition on which McElroy focuses was heavily influenced by abolitionist movements which led women 'to apply the principle of self-ownership to themselves', an emphasis not directly applicable to British feminism (11). Nevertheless, Caird's belief in the equality of both sexes and her rejection of different standards for the sexes (as shown in her arguments for the suffrage, discussed in the next chapter) align with the beliefs of American individualist feminists such as Angelina Grimke, who wrote in 1837 that 'I recognize no rights but human rights—I know nothing of men's rights and women's rights' (qtd. in McElroy 1-2). McElroy cites Caird's articles on marriage (originally published in the Westminster Review) which were later quoted in The Word, an

American periodical which emphasised 'labor-reform and free love' (19).²⁴ McElroy also notes that Caird published an article in an issue of Liberty magazine focusing on children (141), and McElroy includes her within her biographical dictionary of forgotten 'day-to-day radicals', therefore firmly placing Caird within a tradition of individualist feminism (48). While applying this label to Caird would, as discussed in the introduction, pigeonhole her to such an extent that the full range of her work might be ignored, it provides the most accurate description of Caird's approach to the core issues of feminism.

Finally, Caird's approach towards sex and gender allows her work to be incorporated within the context of modern feminist thought.²⁵ For instance, Caird's work could legitimately be examined through the ideas of Monique Wittig, who claims that women 'have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature, with the idea of nature that has been established for us' (2015). The concept of an external standard being set for women, who internalise ideals and thus are

²⁴ McElroy states that Caird's article 'argues for free love' (52), a claim Caird herself specifically rejected in an interview: 'Especially do I object to its being supposed that I have advocated free love, a phrase which is usually held to be synonymous with the promiscuity which is the note of barbarism' ('Free Marriage' 1). However, McElroy defines free love as a belief which 'declared all sexual matters to be the province of the adult individuals involved, not of government' — an attitude Caird leans towards (12).

²⁵ Defining Caird as a feminist begs the question of whether it is possible to label as 'feminists' women who could not have defined themselves as such, as the word was not coined until the late nineteenth century, and not widely used until immediately before the First World War. Barbara Caine, in her introduction to Victorian Feminists (1992), concludes that political terms such as liberalism and socialism 'are used retrospectively to apply to individuals, groups, or ideas which have some recognized or assumed similarity with those for whom the term was originally coined' and that to exclude these terms from modern discussions would result in a lack of 'any signposts in a sea of chaos' (6). Such a conclusion is strengthened by the earlier argument of Barbara Taylor, who, in Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (1983), acknowledged that the word's 'use in this book is an anachronism, justifiable on the grounds that for at least a century prior to the entry of the actual word into popular political discourse there existed the ideology which it described — a distinct and identifiable body of ideas and aspirations commonly known as "the rights of women", the "condition of women" question, the "emancipation of women" and so on' (x). Given these criteria, it is logical to label Caird as a feminist.

‘compelled’ to comply, is one which Caird uses at several key points in her novels, most powerfully in DOD, when Hadria’s physical escape to Paris cannot save her from emotional capitulation to her ‘natural’ duty as a daughter. However, Caird’s arguments in ‘Marriage’ that early matriarchal societies prove the artificiality of modern social gender constructions is the type of argument rejected by Wittig as ‘the same method of finding in women and men a biological explanation of their division, outside of social facts’ (2015). Although, as indicated, Caird does not accept that the ‘division’ between the sexes should be of any social significance, she does not attempt to redefine the actual categories of sex and gender in the way Wittig does with her assertion (borrowed from Simone de Beauvoir) that ‘one is not born a woman’ (2014). Caird wants to exclude from the definition of ‘woman’ any requirement that femininity must stem from the need to bear and nurture children, but she does not question that womanhood is defined by the biological ability to bear children.

Closer to Caird’s views is the theoretical stance of Judith Butler, who argues that the idea of ‘woman’ is fundamentally a social construct. While Butler’s theory that ‘the sex/gender distinction and the category of sex itself appear to presuppose a generalization of “the body” that preexists the acquisition of its sexed significance’ is not a direct reference to Darwinism, it defines Caird’s specific approach to her key issues of maternity and female self-sacrifice: the assumption that the physical ability to reproduce or lack thereof denotes a difference between two types of bodies which then become layered with sexual and gendered nuances (129). For Caird, who argues that the

with the caveat that the term must be understood as having no consistent ideological meaning when applied to Victorian activism, and that she herself would not have used the term.

desire to reproduce is demanded by external forces rather than an inherent manifestation of biological difference, the identification of 'female' with 'woman' — a biological identification merging into a gendered manifestation of that role—becomes, to borrow Butler's terminology, 'performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manifested and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means' (136). Caird contends that a woman's true nature is unknown because it has never been expressed without the baggage of gender, that attention has been paid to what a woman should be rather than what she is, and that any sense of woman's 'natural' role has been smothered under the weight of the gender performance she is required to play: concepts which, to Butler, refer to an 'interiority [which] is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse' (136).

The work of Mary Poovey and Jill Matus indicate the value of examining the nineteenth century through the lens of the Victorian sex/gender divide. Poovey's work on gender in the mid-Victorian period applies twentieth-century interpretations of gender construction to the expression of gender roles in the historical past: 'Instead of accepting the notion that "instincts" and a "natural" difference between the sexes delineate social roles, my project is to mark the historical specificity of this concept of nature [...], I assume that the representation of biological sexuality, the definition of sexual difference, and the social organisation of sexual relations are social, not natural, phenomena' (2). By tracing the development of medical theories of sexual difference in the early nineteenth century, Poovey has marked out a distinct space for the continued application of such theories to the later Victorian period and for the changes which

Darwinian theories brought to ideas of gender. Matus, in Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity (1995), extends the study of the ways in which 'science itself depended on cultural assumptions about gender' in the nineteenth century (7). By focusing on both canonical and non-canonical texts (ranging from George Eliot's Adam Bede to little-known sensation fiction), Matus pays attention to the ways in which the texts "'closet" concerns about the instability of sexuality' (16). This thesis, by applying similar theories on sex and gender to the work of a single late-Victorian author, will use Caird's fiction and non-fiction to explore how a fundamental belief in the distinction between biology and social construction could be used to develop a new vision of womanhood.

A further parameter of Caird's approach can be seen through Butler's idea that 'the term [woman] fails to be exhaustive [...] because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constructed identities' (3). Although Caird does not specify the parameters of her usage of the term 'woman', an examination of her fiction clearly indicates the limitations of her definition: the only area in which she could be said to show divergence is in ethnic/regional background, given that several of her characters (most notably Hadria in DOD and Grierson in TGW) are Scottish, and that Caird not only roots them in Scotland but refers to their Celtic genealogy and heritage. Without exception, her protagonists are white, middle-class, and heterosexual; although this does not make Caird an exception among her peers, given that most known New Woman novels adhere to these boundaries, it

does indicate that Caird did not seek to move radically beyond the boundaries of her historical context.²⁶

However, as the thesis will demonstrate, Caird did work within her historical and literary contexts to offer distinctive ideas about the ways in which both women and men were caught between their individuality and the need to conform to socially-acceptable gender roles. A variety of thinkers and concepts informed her work,²⁷ allowing her to develop both a critical approach to what she saw as the deepest problems of society and a way to ensure that those problems could be solved for the greatest possible benefit.

Gender construction and 'nature'

The use of 'nature' to define the position of women, found in the arguments of Wollstonecraft and Josephine Butler, became a focal point of the contentions of Mill and Caird that the position of women was a social construction. That the inequality of the sexes is 'natural' to the society in which it is practised is dismissed by Mill as being a matter of custom, in the same way that slavery has seemed natural throughout history by

²⁶ There is no known non-white New Woman protagonist, although a case could be made for a black New Woman in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, particularly Nella Larsen's Quicksand (1928) and Passing (1929); see Berg, chapter 5. The working classes are most often represented as ways for New Women to use their wealth and university education for charitable purposes, such as in Walter Besant's All Sorts and Conditions of Men (1882), Mary Ward's Marcella (1894), and Elizabeth Lynn Linton's The One Too Many (1894). Lesbianism in New Woman fiction can obliquely be located in Arabella Kenealy's Dr. Janet of Harley Street (1893), in which Dr. Janet warns her cousin away from a young woman on the grounds that 'I won't have any man make love to her. I want her for myself' (142); Edith Arnold's Platonics (1894), in which the author privileges the close friendship of two women over their relationship with a suitor; and Linton's The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885), her autobiography which she tells from the perspective of a masculine persona.

²⁷ A brief glimpse of Caird's childhood provided by an entry in a biographical dictionary of 1891 demonstrates that, like many women of her period, she fits firmly into the category of a middle-class girl who was not simply a bookworm but an auto-didact: 'From early life she has devoted herself to the study of German philosophy, literature, and poetry, as well as French and English literature, philosophy, and general scientific subjects' (Moon 156).

virtue of being practised extensively. Mill uses cultural relativism to indicate the shifts in attitude towards women that have taken place over the previous centuries—a tactic Caird was to follow—as part of his overarching claim that making arguments based on nature is invalid when nature has been turned to such different uses by various societies. For Mill, the major flaw in society's judgement of woman's 'nature'²⁸ is that the dissimilar treatment of the sexes is due not to any essential inequality but to a perception of inequality. Because woman's 'nature' is seen as fixed by certain rules, stemming from their ability to bear children, women are therefore considered to be restricted by their own innate design. The heart of the matter for Mill (as it came to be for Caird) is that, although 'nature' is cited extensively as the reason why women are significantly different from men, this 'nature' is in fact unknown: 'I deny that any one knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another. [...] What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others' (493). Moulding women into a form then described as 'natural' becomes a

²⁸ Julia Annas, in her 1977 critique of The Subjection of Women, complains that Mill is inconsistent in his use of the term 'nature', because 'we are to be stopped from arguing that it is natural for women to be passive, but we must argue that it is natural for them to want to be free and self-determining in the way that men are', with the confusing result that nature is 'expelled from the argument as an enemy only to be brought in again by the back door' (240). The same claim could also legitimately be made against Caird, who shares Mill's tendency not to define her terms. However, Annas' objection could be explained by the fact that both Mill and Caird are arguing that people are individuals first, regardless of sex, so that a 'natural' love of liberty in women is not a quality that distinguishes them from men, but rather a quality possessed by everyone. Mill views liberty as a bedrock which cannot be closely analysed or explained, contending that 'the a priori presumption is in favour of freedom and impartiality' (472). When looking at the specific reasons why women should want liberty, Mill demonstrated the universality of this need through the way in which he addresses men about women's liberty; he does not ask men to analyse women for answers about what women want, but rather that they should ask themselves: 'he who would rightly appreciate the worth of personal independence as an element of happiness, should consider the value he himself puts upon it as an ingredient of his own' (576). The sexes may differ in biological details, but not in their shared essentials; to both Mill and Caird, the desire for freedom is essential.

means of reducing all women to a single identity, and causes them to be judged not on their individual strengths but on their ability to adhere to that identity. According to Mill, no attempt has yet been made to free women from their artificial boundaries in order to ascertain what their nature might be.

In the introduction to her essay collection The Morality of Marriage (1897), Caird cites Mill's assertion that forcing a woman to occupy such an identity means that any claims to the parameters of women's 'natural' state remain unverified (see MOM/I 14). Throughout her fiction, with minor characters acting as grace notes to heroines, she develops this theme, portraying the ways in which hints of her characters' true natures are suppressed and redirected into more socially acceptable behaviour. Mrs. Fullerton in DOD, for instance, had been subjected 'to the apparent stifling of every native tendency', with the result that only a few 'works of imagination, bore testimony to the lost sides of her nature' (33). More sinister is the way in which Mrs. Fullerton demands that her daughters follow the same paths as she has been forced to take, thus dramatising Mill's contention that 'nature' is an artificial creation.

Mill's essay On Liberty (1859) clarifies the theories of individual rights which were to form the basis of his arguments about the equality of women, and the root of Caird's own ideas on this topic. The only way to determine the nature of people, Mill asserts, is to provide them with the freedom to decide for themselves who they are: 'so it is that there should be different experiments of living; that free scope should be given to varieties of character, short of injury to others; and that the worth of different modes of life should be proved practically, when any one thinks fit to try them. It is desirable, in

short, that in things which do not primarily concern others, individuality should assert itself' (63). One of Caird's major protests against her social climate was that a woman's life in and of itself was believed to 'primarily concern others', because her position as wife, mother, daughter, and sister took precedence over any responsibility to herself as an individual. Eliminating the demand for women to live for others, in Caird's view, was the only way in which women could find personal happiness. Throughout her work, Caird depicts the extreme difficulty of achieving this aim. Many of her characters can only break away through literal escape: Leonore's solo trip to London in *WNL*, Algitha's move to London and Hadria's to Paris in *DOD*, journeys to Russia recalled by Oenone and Anna in *One That Wins* (OTW) and *The Pathway of the Gods* (POTG). This method of placing oneself before obligations to others suggests that Caird believes escaping from one's social boundaries (including one's own family) allows social roles and restrictions to be cast aside. The most dramatic — and perhaps successful — of these flights is taken by Leah in *SOS*, who departs society completely, becoming a prostitute and then a vagrant gypsy. Her identity can be found only by such an extended process of self-exploration: "'I have been wandering far, far," replied Leah half dreamily' (442). However, Caird does not believe that removing oneself entirely from the social body is ideal (as discussed in chapter 3), so she provides examples of how women can free themselves from gender expectations within that social framework. Her ultimate freedom is the 'joined flat' marriage, which allows both partners to retain their individuality, their separate friendships, and (by implication) their physical autonomy even as they are committed to a relationship. This solution clearly accomplishes Mill's

request for 'different experiments of living' by allowing the woman to participate in marriage without being locked into a specific, pre-ordained way of behaving.

Mill's solution to the problem of ascertaining woman's 'nature' is freedom from the pressures of conforming to the role that the dominant elements of society have encouraged women to conform to: 'where, not the person's own character, but the traditions or customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress' (63). Identity must be developed internally, not enforced from without; when woman 'has it inculcated on her as a duty to reckon everything else subordinate to his comfort and pleasure, and to let him neither see nor feel anything coming from her, except what is agreeable to him', it is impossible for men to distinguish the natural elements of her personality from those which are (consciously or unconsciously) engineered to bring satisfaction to others (497). Mill points out the serious flaw in the male 'observations' of woman's nature which 'prove' her limitations: that all of the observations—whether medical, psychological, or personal—have hitherto been conducted by men. Implied bias skewers a rational approach to the subject; the only way to ascertain woman's nature will be through women's observation of themselves, a task which will not be accomplished 'until women themselves have told all that they have to tell' (497). Personal expression, rather than the drawing of external conclusions, is in Mill's view the way to begin to free women from the restrictions conventionally placed upon them.

Although Mill begins The Subjection of Women with an assertion that legal

inequality between the sexes is wrong, his ideas indicate that far more than the legal framework must change for equality to exist. Self-awareness and the ability for self-expression are necessary in order for women to reach a stage where they can determine their own 'natures'. Caird more explicitly acknowledges that the legal position of a state represents only a limited representation of the relationship between the sexes, 'being regarded merely as the means of stereotyping the advance in sentiment when it is achieved' (MOM/I 2). Mill, of course, famously attempted to gain women the right to vote by changing 'man' to 'person' in the Reform Bill of 1867, arguing in The Subjection of Women that suffrage should depend on personal fitness to vote rather than sex: 'if the political system of the country is such as to exclude unfit men, it will equally exclude unfit women' (527). Had Mill's bold move succeeded, he would have changed the landscape of British political history, but in Caird's view, this manoeuvre could never have altered the social context which ruled women unfit to have the vote, for the 'advance in sentiment' about woman's nature had not been achieved.

The tensions between the rights of the individual and those of society (as well as other individuals) are acknowledged by both Mill and Caird, but neither argue that society's rights are allowed to trample on those of the individual. The only case Mill cites in which an individual may be subjected to external control involves situations 'which concern the interest of other people', such as upholding the rights of others in a court case (15). As mentioned, a plea for the rights of the individual does not mean isolation from social context; neither Mill nor Caird suggest that people ought to strive for the destruction of social codes through anarchy, or avoid society altogether by

seeking a life of hermitic isolation. On the contrary, Caird's work emphasises the connections which can and should be made between people, decrying the ways in which socially-defined codes of behaviour damage relationships. In *DOD*, for example, Hadria's relationship with Hubert Temperley can only be placed within a context that denies them the right to 'have interests in common, without wishing instantly to plunge into a condition of things which hampered and crippled them so miserably' (121). They are unable to pursue a friendship in which they themselves can establish the parameters of their intimacy. The only legitimate way they can pursue a deep attachment is through marriage, a status which forces both partners to behave in restrictive ways and removes them from any possibility of pursuing a similar relationship with anyone else. Like Nelly in *OTW*, who encourages her husband to remain friends with the woman he once loved, Hadria wishes to modify the social codes that regulate relationships between the sexes; she does not seek to destroy the social framework within which those codes operate.²⁹

The modifications to gender roles sought by Caird would give primacy to the individual's needs and their own inherent nature over the external controls of society. This would allow for more flexible and personalised relationships, rather than people being forced to adhere to particular roles and thus damaging themselves and each other.

²⁹ A different view of escape is taken by the heroine of Isabel Meredith's *A Girl Among the Anarchists* (1903), who announces her wish to emulate Russian youths who gave up their 'domestic and conventional yokes' in order to live among the masses, interpreting her own to escape 'from all the ideas, customs, and prejudices which usually influence my class' (56). The goals she hopes to accomplish through this 'mental evolution' sound utopian: 'happiness, consisting in the fullest development and exercise of all his faculties, a condition only possible when the individual shall be perfectly free, living in a harmonious society of free men, untrammelled by artificial economic difficulties, and by superstitions inherited from the past' (285). Isabel Meredith was the pseudonym used by Helen Rossetti (1879-?) and Olivia Rossetti (1875-?).

Viola Sedley in WOA, whose marriage becomes a barrier behind which her husband has the right to abuse her, cannot regain her personal rights without removing herself from polite society through exile with her lover.³⁰ A clear example of how social roles override the individual is shown through the marriage of Viola's parents, a relationship based on Mrs. Sedley assiduously 'following the dictates of her creed'—the religious faith which the narrative voice pointedly describes as 'rooted beyond the farthest wanderings of the Reason' (I: 7). As the result of Mrs. Sedley's insistence in moulding herself to a model of 'a ghastly power of self-suppression' (I: 7), Mr. Sedley, 'a man originally good-hearted', becomes 'a creature so selfish, so thick-headed, and often so brutal' that his evil nature is permanently ascendant (I: 8). Both the religious and social pressure placed on Mrs. Sedley to be self-effacing and overly tolerant of her husband's whims, and on Mr. Sedley to be the dominant partner in the marriage, cause a warping of their characters which obliterates their true natures. Therefore, Caird is not arguing that the wishes of the individual should supersede the fact that all people live within a matrix of affiliations and interdependence, nor is she promoting a complete overthrow of the foundations of society. She denies, however, that the value of the individual should be treated as less important than the maintenance of social codes which require the individual to follow a given role. This explains her resentment of the 'duty' of self-sacrifice, which (as will be discussed in chapter 3) subordinates individual rights to the

³⁰ Viola, unlike Nelly and Hadria, has been far too well-trained even to understand that there might be a way to live outwith her social structure: 'She scarcely understood what Philip meant by social laws; she "could not see the town for houses." She had passed her whole life under the shadow of these laws, and was unable to conceive a state of things where they were absent or different' (I: 194). Part of the development Caird depicts in the novel is Viola's slow reclamation of herself as an individual whose worth is greater than that status of abused wife which is the only one allowed her by society. Even then,

needs of others.

Using Mill's argument that society has no right to interfere with 'all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary, and undeceived consent and participation' (16), Caird launches one of her strongest objections to gender construction: that women are not only told that it is their 'nature' to be married, but that the truths of marriage are kept hidden from them, so that women submit blindly and are ignorant of the real restrictions that are being placed on them. Even those who, like Hadria in DOD, see through the charade find themselves trapped within contracts, the real meaning of which they learn only after they have agreed to it. Hadria lays bare the similarities between brides and animals being led to the slaughter: 'I have seen this sort of traditional existence and nothing else, all my life, and I have been brought up to it, with the rest—prepared and decked out like some animal for market—all in the most refined and graceful manner possible; but how can one help seeing through the disguise; how can one be blind to the real nature of the transaction, and to the fate that awaits one' (70). Although she understands the sacrificial nature of marriage, Hadria is initially unaware that the act of becoming a wife means not only taking on that role with relation to her husband, but fulfilling a contract with society to behave in a particular manner, regardless of her personal inclinations. Later in the novel, Hadria protests that she was convinced to enter her marriage contract through deceit; although she was promised that her marriage 'would mean nothing more between Hubert and myself than an unavoidable formality', and that she could continue

however, she accepts without question the social code that will make her shunned by even her closest friends should she leave her husband.

her musical composition, this quickly became superseded by demands that she should fulfil the social obligations required of her (344).

In addition to this socially structured agreement, the legal nature of the marriage contract is, to Caird and other New Woman writers, evidence that women were subjected to a different code than men. Sarah Grand's eponymous heroine Ideala (1888) uses logic to demonstrate that the situation in which women are placed is one which would not be tolerated in other areas, and that this should logically allow the woman to break her agreement after the fact:

"If I signed a contract," Ideala explained, "and found out afterwards that those who induced me to become a party to it had kept me in ignorance of the most important clause in it, so that I really did not know to what I was committing myself, would you call that a moral contract? [...] suppose there was something in the clause to which I very strongly objected, something of which my conscience disapproved, something that was repugnant to my whole moral nature; and suppose I was forced by the law to fulfil it nevertheless, should you say that was a moral contract? Should you not say that in acting against my conscience I acted immorally?"

We all fell into the trap, and looked an encouraging assent. [...]

"But I don't see what particular contract you are thinking of," said the lawyer.

"The marriage contract," Ideala answered, calmly. (217-19)

For Grand as well as Caird, women's personal beliefs are unfairly being overridden socially and legally when they are not given the full information necessary to decide for themselves whether they wish to embark upon marriage. Hadria, confronting her sister-in-law after the marriage breaks down, contends that the marriage contract is considered acceptable even when accomplished through dishonest means because it involves a woman: 'And yet you would have felt yourselves stained with dishonour for the rest of

your lives had you procured anything else on false pretences! But a woman—that is a different affair. The code of honour does not here apply, it would seem. Any fraud may be honourably practiced on her' (344-45). Because women are seen as 'naturally' intended for marriage, Caird argues, it is considered unimportant whether her rights as an individual are upheld. Hadria's attempts at being honest about her personal nature and about what she herself personally expected from marriage were overridden by her sister-in-law's conviction that she would submit to marriage as all women did, leading to Hadria being forced to adhere to her 'function' as a wife.

Caird is not simply exploring female identity, but distinguishing between sex and gender, rejecting the belief that the former decrees the latter. She argues that elements that are believed to be essentially derived from biology—a woman's instinct to nurture, to sacrifice her own desires for those of others, and to commit herself to domesticity—are in fact no more than 'acquired tricks' to which women have been trained. Caird's clearest objection to the accepted definition of woman's 'nature' stems from the concept of sexual distinction based on a woman's ability to reproduce. In his 1873 article 'Psychology of the Sexes', Herbert Spencer argued that women are as mentally distinct from men as they are physically, 'related to their respective shares in the rearing and protection of offspring' (31). The differences between the sexes are thus a manifestation of Nature's 'adjustment of special powers to special functions' (31). Caird denies Spencer's insistence, claiming instead that the limitation of women is (literally) a man-made restriction which uses reproduction as its excuse. Because women have been coerced into believing that motherhood defines their existence, woman's 'nature'—the

manifestation of her instincts and personality—is artificially constructed. In her view, the social construction of gender, artificially correlated with biological sex, stands firmly in the way of any discoveries about women and how they, as individuals, possess unlimited potential.

Women, to Caird, must not be lumped together into a single category based on their biological sex. Throughout her work, she emphasises that individualism must be cultivated and respected, rather than subordinated to a ‘greater’ whole. Although she shows the strength of individuals coming together *en masse*,³¹ she does not argue that progress should be sought through individuals being subsumed into a group mentality—gendered or otherwise. Rather, the strength of society comes from the unique ideas and talents each individual contributes. Caird posits the importance of the individual within a larger context as early as her first novel; in WNL, Leonore believes she has ‘lost the salt and savour of existence’, following a protracted battle to continue being an artist in the face of overwhelming domestic tasks (III: 301). She concludes that in the grand scheme of things, the absence of one person cannot count for much: ‘Her life had gone astray, and could never be set right; but what did one spoiled life more or less matter out of so many? Her dreams were ended; that was all’ (III: 301). By marrying, she feels, she has removed herself from living a life beneficial to her own happiness. She therefore concludes that the contribution of her future life can only be to warn others who might make the same attempts to combine domesticity with creation: ‘She might serve now perhaps as a warning to others—a sort of moral scarecrow’ (III: 301).

³¹ This is most evident in her later books—the group known as the Alternatives in SOS, and the scientific gatherings in TGW.

However, Caird provides Leonore with the earliest example of the New Man, Austin Bradley, who refuses to let Leonore succumb to this attempt to ‘buy inglorious ease for yourself by betraying your own nature’ (III: 321). He sees her resignation as an excuse to allow herself to relinquish her responsibility to herself and her creative vision. Even though resigning herself to domesticity is the easier option, given that everyone around her expects her to do so, and that resisting it has led Leonore to a ‘terrible dual life’ (III: 309), Austin insists that she must place her own life first. Not only is it the only possible way for her to be true to herself, but as Austin explains, it does indeed matter to the world that she encourages her own development: “‘What can I, a poor, miserable unit, do in so vast a world, amid such monster elements and powers?’” If there is rescue and hope and progress for humanity, assuredly they lie in the brains and hearts of its “‘miserable’” component units’ (III: 321). That this concept represents Caird’s viewpoint, rather than simply the expression of a character, is demonstrated in her continued insistence on the importance and value of the individual, as will be shown throughout the thesis.

Caird’s belief in the importance of the individual never wavers, but her emphasis changes over the course of her career. From Austin’s vague talk in 1883 of the advantages the individual can bring to ‘so vast a world’, by TGW in 1931 Caird offers the potential for the individual to bring about the end of human suffering. In this final novel, an antagonistic character summarises the potential of a dedicated individual: ‘I venture to say that the world’s future, in a literal sense, is in the hands of our brilliant young friend here, who is busy endowing us with mechanical slaves, possessed of

powers hitherto undreamt of' (487). While this is intended as sarcasm, the novel's overall themes indicate that Caird is quite serious about the possibility that one person can affect the future. Caird therefore moves over the course of her career from theoretical arguments that one individual can affect the world into specific examinations of how this can occur, and the devastation that can result if the individual is blocked by artificial barriers.

Caird's evolutionary theories

'Evolution! the word awes us. [...] Belief in the power of man to choose his direction of change: this is the creed of the future, and it will soon come to be the distinctive mark of the essentially modern thinker.' ('Ideal Marriage' 618, 619)

Where Caird develops most notably from her influences, proving herself to be neither aping Rationalism nor copying Mill, is the way in which her ideas are rooted within theories of evolutionary science. In her historical period, such ideas become a major interpretative framework, and Caird borrowed this concept; a belief in continuing evolution formed the foundation of her belief in the ability of humanity to progress. Her promotion of evolution as a framework for interpretation and development is both the integration of a prevalent cultural trope and a way of ensuring that her ideas of the benefits of individualism would extend beyond the boundaries of social change, becoming part of the overall maturation of humanity.

Caird sees evolution as a process which does not have a predictable result, so she

does not use her work to dictate a narrow solution to the problem of how women should change or men respond to them, or even dictate how society should change. As she states in her article 'The Morality of Marriage' (1890), 'social changes are too gradual and subtle for [...] draughtsman-like forecasts to be of any use or meaning' (322).

Instead, her approach is to indicate the way in which society can best prepare itself for growth and bring about that development: 'All that can be done, at any given time in the world's history, is to indicate the next direction of development, initiate or emphasize the tendency of human thought, sentiment and institutions, for some new conception' (322). Rather than attempting to 'fix' society by decreeing that certain elements will bring an immediate and dramatic change, she accepts that there is a natural growth process inherent in evolution, which must be allowed to occur freely. In the introduction to The Morality of Marriage (1897), she explains that the progression society needs to take to reach a higher stage of development is not predictable:

It is not a mere matter of putting one object in the place of another object, as one substitutes one block for another in a puzzle. In the life of a tree, the later stages are not substitutes for the earlier ones. The development is continuous and gradual, the flower being the culmination of the growing process. In the same way, human nature is in a state of development, and its institutions are the expressions of its stages of growth. No great and fundamental institution was ever put bodily into the place of a preceding one. The new one was absolutely non-existent at the time of those first movements of thought which ended by abolishing the earlier condition; and had the final state of affairs been foreseen by the reformers of the era, it would have been no more possible to anticipate that state by legal enactment than it would be to cause a flower to appear on a tree which was just beginning to thrust forth its first young leaves' (MOM/I 4).

Evolution itself is Caird's metaphor for the progress society needed to make, an accomplishment Mill clearly felt could succeed with a less dramatic alteration, as shown

by his attempt to give women the right to vote by changing the wording of a political document. Caird disagreed with such an approach, claiming that 'legal relaxation can never take the place of moral evolution' ('Morality' 325). The act of development itself is essential to change. Development does not have to be a solitary process—again, Caird is not advocating isolationism—but it needs to occur in a context conducive to progress. In her novels, such development frequently occurs when freedom is granted where restriction had previously been in place, such as in OTW and SOS, where marriage becomes a state for emancipation rather than constriction. The development of individuals in Caird's work, when they are allowed freedom to grow without artificial boundaries, stands for the possibility that such evolution can continue to occur on a widespread scale. The individual represents both the building block of the society she believes will result from humanity's continued evolution, and the necessary means of bringing about that evolution.

In claiming that humanity is an organic element capable of evolution, Caird views it as a complex organism—a view she may have initially found in the work of one of her major influences, Herbert Spencer, who was (in the words of Donald Macrae) 'an evolutionist before Darwin', applying evolutionary theories 'to the physical, biological and social universes' (21). Spencer pessimistically believed that on the level of humanity itself, successful evolution could not occur, because 'each entire society [...] loses power to re-adjust itself to the circumstances of the future' (Principles 147). Spencer sees a limit to the extent of evolution: 'as in individual organisms so in social organisms, after the structures proper to the type have fully evolved there presently

begins a slow decay' (146).³² Caird, in contrast, believes that humanity as a social organism is capable of evolution, and that cultivating the 'type' leads only to conformity and stagnation. She sees social development—the way in which society changes to adapt to 'the circumstances of the future'—as a means of increasing the drive towards evolution rather than halting it: 'with the social changes which would go hand in hand with changes in the status of marriage, would come inevitably many fresh forms of human power, and thus all sorts of new and stimulating influences would be brought to bear upon society. [...] Development involves an increase of complexity' ('Marriage' 200). That she does not specify 'fresh forms of human power' does not indicate a paucity of vision, but an acknowledgement that she herself is not capable of predicting how evolution on such a large scale will proceed.

While Caird's ideas of social evolution work on many levels, one of her primary interests is the position of women within theories of evolution. In her view, the status of women—particularly in theories related to natural selection—is based on the fact that women are treated by social theorists as an exception to evolutionary theories, and that this then becomes the explanation for fixing them immutably in a single role. Women alone are deemed incapable of change within a worldview modelled upon the ability to

³² Degeneration, a concept hypothesised by French psychiatrists earlier in the nineteenth century, became well-known in Britain through the 1895 English translation of Max Nordau's *Entartung (Degeneration)*, published in German in 1892. The book went through seven editions within six months, spawning debates and responses for years after its publication. Degeneracy was in one sense the manifestation of a fear that society was regressing back to savagery—a particularly important issue with regard to women, who, as the social vessels of moral purity as well as the literal carriers of future generations, had the potential to cause enormous damage to society, or even to bring about the end of civilisation. Caird's views—like those of other New Woman writers—were seen by many critics not as a way to move society towards emancipation, but a retrograde step and a cause of social decay; Janet E. Hogarth, in 'Literary Degenerates' (1895), views New Woman writing through the ideas of degeneracy, expressing the hope that 'sex mania in art and literature' will 'be but a passing phase' (592).

change: 'Women are the wild rice of the modern philosophical world. They are treated as if they alone were exempt from the influences of natural selection, of the well-known effects upon organs and aptitudes of continued use or disuse—effects which every one has exemplified in his own life, which every profession proves, and which is freely acknowledged in the discussion of all questions except those in which woman forms an important element' (MOM/M 63). The exclusion of women from the theories of evolution is, to Caird, not only thoroughly illogical but impossible. In a world brought to its current state through millions of years of evolution, it is inconceivable that one half of humanity could be the only group exempt from that progress. That this has occurred means, to her, that women are being judged by their expected role and that this determines how they are placed within evolution, not the other (and more rational) way around.

When society denies that women have any capacity for adapting to circumstances, according to Caird, two things result: women are trained to accept the role in which they have been placed, which atrophies skills they might otherwise develop, and socially-decreed limitations come to be seen as 'natural', thus creating a cycle wherein women who accept those limitations are held up as examples of how 'natural' they are. By denying women's ability to evolve, society causes them to stagnate to the point where they cannot evolve. The foundation of Caird's argument that women have become artificial creations, and need to free themselves from socially-mandated gender construction in order to develop naturally as individuals, is that

‘instinctive’³³ behaviour based on biological function is in fact the result of a systematic course of social training. Women, taught to behave in certain ways which align to the social conception of ‘ideal’ feminine behaviour, are then instructed that such behaviour is indeed the only ‘natural’ expression of their sex. The indoctrination becomes so ingrained as to be indistinguishable from the ‘intentions of Nature’, and women are therefore denied any opportunity to evolve. Hadria in DOD provides a sardonic summation of this process:

“Girls,” she went on to assert, “are stuffed with certain stereotyped sentiments from their infancy, and when that painful process is completed, intelligent philosophers come and smile upon the victims, and point to them as proofs of the intentions of Nature regarding our sex, admirable examples of the unvarying instincts of the feminine creature. In fact,” Hadria added with a laugh, “it’s as if the trainer of that troop of performing poodles that we saw, the other day, at Ballochcoil, were to assure the spectators that the amiable animals were inspired, from birth, by a heaven-implanted yearning to jump through hoops, and walk about on their hind legs—”

“But there are such things as natural instincts,” said Ernest.

“There are such things as acquired tricks,” returned Hadria. (DOD 23)

Caird distinguishes what is innate from what is taught, claiming that women’s behaviour and attitudes result from training that begins early. She similarly sees women’s characteristics being trained by a system of socially-ordained rewards and punishments (represented by the figure of Mrs. Grundy³⁴), to match a ‘certain stereotyped’ ideal of

³³ Caird does not deny the existence of instincts or innate abilities. Hadria, for instance, is heavily influenced by her northern Scottish surroundings, and Caird points out that she has ‘instinct that was born in her with her Celtic blood’ (DOD 17). A study of racial characteristics in Caird’s work is beyond the scope of this thesis, but this example indicates that Caird’s argument is not against instincts per se, but rather against artificially defined instincts which are in fact social constructions.

³⁴ Mrs. Grundy was a character in Thomas Morton’s play *Speed the Plough* (1798) and became the nineteenth-century ‘personification of the tyranny of social opinion in matters of conventional propriety’

femininity. When the young Viola Sedley refuses to kiss Sir Philip Dendraith, she is chastised not simply for rudeness but for failing to adhere to her ideal role: 'you should not speak so, you know; it is not like a little lady' (WOA I: 47).

Caird's view of evolution works on many levels, all parallel to each other: just as the individual must be spared artificial construction in order to develop freely, society must free itself from its rigid demands for specific gendered behaviour in order to move towards a higher state of existence. Throughout her analysis, Caird is far more precise about anatomising the problems which exist than she is about proposing the results that would emerge if those problems were solved. In one sense, this is only natural, given her previously-quoted statement that 'development is continuous and gradual, the flower being the culmination of the growing process'; it would be impossible to predict the end result of a flower if one was only present at the beginning of its development. It does, however, become more challenging to discuss the results Caird hopes to see from social evolution, as she emphasises barriers rather than successes. It is clear, though, that her vision of a future in which people are freed from artificial restrictions to develop without hindrance is present throughout her work.

(Oxford English Dictionary 6: 906). Willa Muir, in her essay 'Mrs. Grundy in Scotland' (1936), traces the development of Mrs. Grundy's influence in nineteenth-century England and Scotland, determining that this figure is not a representation of 'the whole sum of social forces in the life of a nation' but rather 'a reflection in a distorting mirror' of 'the composite fears of those individuals who are anxious or uncertain about what they ought to do, the timid who look to their neighbours or to precedent, the people who are unsure of themselves and waiting for a lead' (44).

Chapter 2: Caird's New Woman contexts

New Woman writing, both fiction and non-fiction, attempted to establish how 'new' a woman could become and to explore the potential range of her modern identity. Rational Dress, latch-keys, and bicycles symbolised freedom on personal and social levels, indicating emancipation not only from tightly-laced corsets, restrictive chaperonage, and the physical boundaries of one's immediate surroundings,³⁵ but also from the social and cultural restrictions which placed women within particular modes of suitable behaviour. However, in spite of these overt signs that the woman of the 1890s was not hemmed in by the same strictures that had constrained her grandmother or even her mother, the assumptions demonstrated by writers in all parts of the debate indicate that the fundamental nature of the New Woman was not 'new' at all. Assumptions about woman's instincts towards domesticity, nurturance, and self-abnegation meant that the 'newness' of her position in the public sphere and a reinterpretation of marriage and motherhood reflected not a change in the definition of womanhood, but in how woman should serve the purpose for which she was created.

In spite of the influence of Mill, whose ideas were frequently referred to by other New Woman writers,³⁶ theories of individualism played only a minor role within the

³⁵ Flora Thompson, in the third volume of the Lark Rise to Candleford trilogy (originally published in 1943), praises the bicycle in part for offering freedom from unwanted social interaction: 'And oh! the joy of the new means of progression. To cleave the air as though on wings, defying time and space by putting what had been a day's journey on foot behind one in a couple of hours! Of passing garrulous acquaintances who had formerly held one in one-sided conversation by the roadside for an hour, with a light ting, ting of the bell and a casual wave of recognition' (478).

³⁶ See, for instance, Hermione Ramsden's introduction to Laura Marholm Hansson's Modern Women (1896), where Mill is dismissed as the leader of the 'advanced thinkers' (vi), and Sarah Grand's The Heavenly Twins (1893), in which Mill's ideas denote Evadne's lines of thought, as she 'had drawn her

development of New Woman writing in the late 1880s and 1890s.³⁷ Caird is the only significant New Woman writer who argued that emancipation should be based on women's innate rights as individuals, rather than interpreted through ideals of gender. Although the New Woman debate offered a variety of reactionary responses to mid-century models of womanhood, most authors and social critics of the late nineteenth century maintained that a woman's fundamental role was to be a mother and, as a related secondary concern, to be useful to others to the point of self-abnegation. As a result, the dominant interpretation of the New Woman was not of an emancipated individual, but of a free woman—a figure who strove to better fulfil the gender role seemingly dictated by her biological sex. Many writers therefore argued that women should be freed from sexual ignorance, legal 'coverture' within marriage, and the inability to vote not in order to seek self-sufficiency, but to expand their usefulness to their husbands and families on a greater scale than previously possible. Caird, in contrast, privileged the rights of women to develop as individuals, placing their own needs—personal fulfilment in artistic goals, and marriages in which they are equals rather than subjects—over their requirement to serve their families, society, and race.

This chapter will contextualise Caird as a New Woman writer, establishing her

own conclusions' before finding that she had independently reached the same ideas as Mill expressed in The Subjection of Women (14).

³⁷ The 'beginning' of the New Woman debate cannot be strictly pinpointed, but a useful starting point is Olive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm (1883), which is not only acknowledged in modern criticism as the first ideologically consistent New Woman novel, but was cited as such in its own time. Little more than a decade after its publication, Thomas Bradfield described it as the work which 'first clearly sounded the note of revolt' (541), while W.T. Stead not only credited it as 'the forerunner' of 'The Novel of the Modern Woman' but placed Schreiner as 'the founder and high priestess of the school' (64). Fiction that could be considered part of the developing New Woman trope as the 1880s progressed includes Walter Besant's All Sorts and Conditions of Men (1882), in which an heiress uses her wealth and her university education to improve the lives of East End working women; Annie Edwardes' discussion of

distinctive and influential role within the New Woman debate. The crucial difference of viewpoint between Caird and her contemporaries—the position of woman as individual first and gendered being second, versus the equation of her biological status as ‘female’ defining her as ‘woman’—will be specifically examined through two important debates of the *fin de siècle* in which Caird took part. The first is the movement for women’s suffrage. Although Caird does not seem to have played a significant role on the national level,³⁸ she debated the issue in important publications such as the *Times* and the *Westminster Review*, arguing for women’s right to vote based on their status as equal citizens. This contrasted with the view of many pro-suffrage activists, who shared with the anti-suffragists the belief that women’s position in the public sphere would be based on their distinctively feminine approach to political issues. The second debate, in which she played a pivotal role, is that of debates about marriage reform. Caird’s concept of marriage as the free union of two equal individuals, rather than a gendered (and thus inherently unbalanced) relationship, will be extensively discussed in chapter 4; this chapter will examine how her individualist theories prompted a widespread debate in which her contemporaries largely reiterated the essential difference between the sexes as integral to the position of women within marriage. That this debate occurred at all, however, indicates that the status of wives was being subjected to particular scrutiny within the late-Victorian ‘Woman Question’.

After contextualising Caird within these social movements, the chapter will

higher education for women, *A Girton Girl* (1885); and Sarah Grand’s first novel, *Ideala* (1888), which explores how a woman who initially rejects feminism comes to define herself through its tenets.

³⁸ For instance, she is not listed in *The Suffrage Annual and Women’s Who’s Who*, although her support of the suffrage movement began well before the volume’s publication in 1913.

examine her ideas alongside those of two contemporaries who also had a major impact on the New Woman debate. Like Caird, both Sarah Grand and Grant Allen not only contributed, but shaped the discussion of what the New Woman should become; unlike Caird, they felt that a woman's primary duty was to her biological ability to bear children, and to supporting other women. While Grand in particular promoted the equality of the sexes, both she and Allen based their arguments on the essential sexual difference between men and women. Ultimately, both writers offered a New Woman figure who, while in many ways a symbol of change and modernity, was restricted in action and belief to the boundaries of her biology. Contrasting their theories to those held by Caird continues the work of establishing her place within New Woman writing (as discussed in the introduction), and provides a vital means of demonstrating the distinctive nature of Caird's ideas of individualism within her literary and social context.

Female suffrage

The rhetoric of the late-Victorian suffrage movements hinged on the issue of whether women could exist as individuals who could interact with society as individuals, or whether—as most social theorists concluded—they were restricted in their public interactions by the 'natural' limitations of their gender. Both sides of the suffrage argument used the trope of essential female identity to justify their positions.

The article 'An Appeal Against Female Suffrage' (1889), published in the Nineteenth Century on behalf of over a hundred female signatories, opens with an assertion that women could not be given the same roles in the running of society as those

held by men. Although the authors claim to want ‘the fullest possible development of the powers, energies, and education of women’, they reject any need for women to have the vote. Their argument is based on the belief that, as the sexes differ physically, their position in the public sphere will reflect this: ‘their [women’s] work for the State, and their responsibilities towards it, must always differ essentially from those of men, and that therefore their share in the working of the State machinery should be different from that assigned to men’ (781). The article’s writers argue that women are not suited for full suffrage because of both ‘the limits fixed by the physical constitution of women’ (782) and the ‘strong formations of custom and habit resting ultimately on physical difference’ (781)—both the ‘natural’ weakness of women in comparison to men, and the social conventions which developed to adapt to that weakness. That the position of woman was partly based on social factors did not negate the basic argument that woman was a biological creature. Her ability to vote therefore needed to be limited to those aspects of public life which suited her physical and emotional nature, such as ‘care of the sick and the insane; the treatment of the poor; the education of children’ (782)—duties which mirrored the work that Victorian advice manuals urged women to pursue within the home. The political ramifications of this sentiment were famously summarised by Eliza Lynn Linton in her 1891 article ‘The Wild Women as Politicians’: ‘The cradle lies across the door of the polling-booth and bars the way to the senate’ (80). The evolution of women to participate in the public sphere, therefore, could not extend outwith their ‘raison d’être of [...] maternity’ (80), and restricted them to their ‘natural’ expressions of ‘thought, conscience, and moral influence’ (‘Appeal’ 782).

The pro-suffrage movements also based their arguments on an inherent difference between the sexes, indicating their belief that biological difference would dictate the changing position of women. Two replies to 'An Appeal Against Natural Suffrage', published later in 1889, demonstrate the ways in which pro-suffrage campaigners argued that the distinctiveness of woman's 'nature' was not a reason for restricting her access to the franchise, but rather her strength. Millicent Garrett Fawcett states outright that she and other pro-suffrage campaigners have no desire to conflate the sexes, but rather to uphold their distinctions: 'We do not want women to be bad imitations of men; we neither deny nor minimise the differences between men and women. The claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on those differences. Women bring something to the service of the state different from that which can be brought by men' (96). Similarly, M.M. Dilke's reply argues that the supporters of female suffrage 'wish women to vote because they are different from men, and because no alteration of laws, or customs, or social habits will make them the same as men' (98). The vote was viewed by the pro-suffrage camp as a way to allow women to become more womanly—to expand their particular strengths into a wider arena from serving as 'guardians of the poor' and 'members of School Boards' on the local level (100). Effectively, the argument surrounding votes for women centred on whether they should have the vote as women, using the franchise for an appropriately feminine range of issues. This is reflected in arguments about whether the vote should be given to all women, or only those who were unmarried; Fawcett argues in favour of harmony in the household by supporting the latter, claiming that to do otherwise would, 'in ninety-nine

cases out of a hundred, [...] give two votes to the husband' (95). Women who are 'ratepayers and taxpayers' (94) should have political representation, but not women qua women. To suffrage campaigners, a woman deserved to vote based on her specific role.

Caird, in contrast, firmly places herself within the category of people 'who regard women as a truly integral part of the human race' and demands the vote on the grounds that women are equal citizens (Letter, 11 Aug. 1908). Her arguments in favour of women's suffrage are based on the need for all citizens of a free society to deserve representation, whereas she interprets the current status as upholding the belief 'that a representative system ought on no account to permit more than half the nation to be represented' ('Political Enfranchisement' 280).³⁹ Unlike commentators such as Fawcett and the signatories of the 'Appeal', Caird does not argue about how the suffrage should be moderated to accommodate women's 'natural' limitations, but begins from the standpoint that the two sexes are fundamentally equal and deserve to be treated as such. This leads her to question why the sexes should be treated differently in their desire for political representation—specifically, why women should be held to higher standards: 'If a man possesses the franchise merely because he has certain qualifications, and without reference to what his motives may be in using it, it seems unreasonable that a woman should be expected to protest that she would use her vote with such remarkable and distinguished virtue. Why this imposition of special tests in the case of the luckless sex?' (283) Caird rejects the belief that women are inherently more pure and that they

³⁹ Although, as referred to in chapter 1, the post-medieval belief in two sexes rather than women as a variant of men led to the concept that women could represent themselves as women, Caird is not standing on such a platform, but rather arguing that both women and men deserve the right to representation.

must extend this quality to their public contributions.⁴⁰ To Caird, the fact that women are individuals, with as wide a range of intelligence, morality, and detrimental qualities as men, means that refusing them the vote is little more than blatant injustice: 'Women are part of the human family, be their rank in it what it may. They have needs, interests, dangers, as well as their fellows, and they have an obvious claim to enjoy the full privileges involved in the principle upon which the constitution of their country is founded' (286). To consider them anything less is to deny them essential rights, and to keep them in perpetual inferiority as a diminished subset whose abilities and desires are artificially constrained.

Caird repeatedly challenges the 'inherent' differences between the sexes which allegedly make them suited for differing purposes. She summarises a variety of anti-suffrage arguments in order to demonstrate that the tactic of defining women by their gender roles only highlights how arbitrary those roles are, and how supposedly 'natural' tendencies can be manipulated to any desired social conclusion:

Women are excluded, for instance, because they are weak, and Nature intends the strong to rule; they are excluded because they are strong, and have all the power they need through their personal influence; they are excluded because they are already amply represented by men, and are so united with them in interest that they would all vote as their husbands bade them; they are also excluded because if they had a vote they would instantly vote

⁴⁰ Sexual purity was a keynote of the work of Josephine Butler, the social activist who headed the Ladies' National Association and worked for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, which attempted to reduce venereal disease among the armed forces by subjecting prostitutes to medical examinations and, if infected, incarceration. Founded in 1870, the LNA published a Woman's Manifesto and 'provided a crash course in the sexual double standard' for women who had never before seen it discussed publicly (Mangum 166). Although one of the major issues in the battle for repeal was that the Acts 'deprived poor women of their constitutional rights' (Walkowitz, *Prostitution* 2), Butler felt horror that the existence of such legislation was a means of sanctioning 'male promiscuity as a physiological necessity' (129). Sarah Grand's subsequent emphasis on sexual purity as crucial to the emancipation of women is one indication of the way in which Butler's ideas influenced later feminists.

exactly the other way, and so bring strife and warfare into peaceful homes throughout the country' (281).

By being treated as a subset of humanity rather than as a full and equal part, and locked into a single gendered identity, women are subject to interpretation by any dominant social ideal. This, to Caird, collapses the argument that women are essentially defined by their biology by demonstrating that women become defined by social claims about how they should behave.

That Caird rejected the belief that women should remain within boundaries established by others can be seen from her response to the militant branch of the suffrage movement. Although Caird refused to ally herself with the militants, she acknowledges sympathy in letters and articles for the frustration which led them to violent tactics. In particular, she denounces the protests against militancy which argued that women should only fight for the vote using legal methods. In her view, the fact that women are not given full legal rights justifies—or at least makes understandable—their militancy: 'When women possess full human and civic rights, they may justly be called upon (in common with other possessors of such rights) to confine themselves to constitutional measures, but since quiet appeals of forty or fifty years' duration failed to obtain a hearing, it can hardly be said that constitutional measures of any efficacy are really open to them' ('Militant Tactics' 528). For Caird, the suffrage movement was not simply about earning the right to vote, but doing so on a platform which did not segregate women as inferior or limited by social constructions based on their biological difference from men. It needed to incorporate a view of equality, rejecting the belief that a woman's right to vote depended on her marital status, her physical abilities, or her

intentions to use her vote for social benefit.

Marriage reform

Caird's position as a significant voice in late-Victorian feminism is proven by her central role within one of the major New Woman debates of the late 1880s: whether marriage was in need of reform. Even in her article 'Marriage' (1888), her first exploration of these ideas and the publication which triggered the public response, she seems to have been aware that her theories of individualism would be seen as a deliberate challenge to the basis of social views of womanhood. She announces in the opening paragraph of 'Marriage' that by drastically reinterpreting this social structure, she will be seen as attacking 'the foundations of society and the sacredness of the home!'⁴¹ Her contentions on marriage and its failure indeed prompted angry and extensive responses.⁴² This article not only demonstrates the consistency of her commitment to ideas of gender equality and emancipation from artificial models of behaviour, but confirms that her expression of those ideas played a significant role in shaping late-Victorian debates on women.

⁴¹ Although Caird claims at the start of 'Marriage' that religious controversy would not cause an outcry in the same way, earlier that year, examinations of religious doubts and crisis of faith in Mrs. Humphry Ward's novel Robert Elsmere (1888) had elicited a flurry of commentary from notable figures, including William Gladstone; see Sutherland, Mrs. Humphry Ward 125-131. It is possible that Caird is deliberately setting up a straw man, or exaggerating for rhetorical purposes.

⁴² The outcry had a personal effect on Caird, who in the midst of the Daily Telegraph's letter-writing frenzy noted calmly that 'I have myself received some hard blows' ('Mrs. Caird's First Reply' 39). Writer Annie S. Swan reflected in her 1934 memoir that Caird 'had thrown a flaming bomb into the camp of the thoroughly smug and respectable ranks' with the result that 'she was banned and shunned like the plague in certain circles' (71; qtd. in Forward, 'Study' 296). An interesting counterpoint to her fame is found in the journals of Elizabeth Robins Pennell; at the 1889 Society of Authors dinner, Pennell notes that Laurence Hutton, seated next to Caird, 'had never heard of her before and asked me before dinner what she had done!' (Waltman 392). That this was notable enough to be recorded in Pennell's journal indicates the significance of being ignorant of Caird and her public stature.

As shown in the previous chapter, Caird built on the opinions of John Stuart Mill in arguing that social construction had obfuscated women's nature to the extent that it could not even be identified. By beginning 'Marriage' with a statement explicitly rejecting 'the careless use of the words "human nature," and especially "woman's nature"', Caird sets out her position as one of denying received opinion: 'With regard to "woman's nature," concerning which innumerable contradictory dogmas are held, there is so little really known about it, and its power of development, that all social philosophies are more or less falsified by this universal though sublimely unconscious ignorance' (186). Caird offers a redefinition of woman's place in marriage, as well as the meaning of womanhood itself. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she refused to equate the two. In fact, Caird takes three pages to discuss the 'nature' of women before addressing the topic of marriage, indicating that in spite of the article's title, her concern is not simply with a social institution.

Using the language of contemporary scientific inquiry, and thus grounding her ideas in her particular cultural context, Caird bemoans that women are excluded from rules of evolution and natural selection (as discussed in chapter 1). As a result, she argues, there is 'no social philosophy, however logical and far-seeing on other points, which does not lapse into incoherence as soon as it touches the subject of women' (187). Although Caird does not explicitly draw connections to theories of natural selection, she is asserting that women are capable of adapting to circumstances, but that social refusal to allow them to do so means they have been distorted into beings whose 'nature has adapted itself to the misfortune of captivity' (188). That this is so explains why women

are apparently 'suited' to a particular method of living—they have been constricted to live in this manner and have therefore adapted to it:

we have subjected women for centuries to a restricted life, which called forth one or two forms of domestic activity; we have rigorously excluded (even punished) every other development of power; and we have then insisted that the consequent adaptations of structure, and the violent instincts created by this distorting process, are, by a sort of compound interest, to go on adding to the distortions themselves, and at the same time to go on forming a more and more solid ground for upholding the established system of restriction, and the ideas that accompany it. (188)

In setting out her arguments of women's unnatural restrictions, Caird is laying the foundation both for her rejection of marriage as it exists in her time, and for her claims that a modified marriage is not only achievable but ideal. It will serve to begin breaking down the 'system of restriction' of which modern marriage is such a large part, and open a way for women to begin exploring the realities of their 'nature'.

In linking woman's nature to the social state of marriage, Caird indicates that she is building not only on the ideas of Mill, but on those of her contemporary Karl Pearson (1857-1936). A mathematician and eugenicist, Pearson founded the Men and Women's Club (1885-89), which had a wide range of discussion topics but paid particularly close attention to issues of sexuality.⁴³ Pearson argues in a paper presented to the Club in

⁴³ Caird had a tenuous connection to the Club; Lucy Bland's research illustrates that Caird was present at a Club meeting in May 1887 which discussed birth control, a topic 'of which she, unlike most of the female club members, approved' (127). Bland argues that although Caird 'was seriously considered for membership,' she was not asked to join, in part due to Olive Schreiner's opinion of her as 'a narrow, one-sided woman, violently prejudiced against men' (qtd. in Bland 126). Bland is here quoting a letter from September 1885 (during the first year of the Club), and notes that Schreiner later changed her mind. In 1886, Schreiner wrote to Karl Pearson and asked, 'Was the writer of that paper Mrs. Caird? The ideas are just like what she has expressed to me in speaking. It gives one hope to hear such brave free words from a woman' (Letters 74). (The paper referred to was a response to the ideas expressed by Pearson in 'The Woman's Question', which he presented at the opening session of the Club in 1885. The paper Schreiner thought had been written by Caird was in fact that of Emma Brooke, whose New Woman novel A Superfluous Woman was published in 1894.) Although Walkowitz goes further than Bland, stating that

1885 that the nature of woman is not only unknown, but must be identified; without doing this, he states in 'The Woman's Question', 'we cannot safely determine whither the emancipation of women is leading us, or what is the true answer which must be given to the woman's question' (371). Modern historian Judith Walkowitz argues that 'there was nothing particularly remarkable about [Caird's] sentiments' on the topic of marriage, pointing out the influence of Pearson's 'historical and evolutionary approach to marriage' ('Science' 55). Certainly, Pearson's concept of an unidentified woman's nature, as well as his idea that an ideal union between man and woman may be 'the only one in which a woman can preserve her independence, can be a wife and yet retain her individual liberty', both become cornerstones of Caird's suggestions for the changing position of women (385). However, Pearson's insistence that women's emancipation depends on 'the effect of her emancipation on her function of race-reproduction' clashes with Caird's rejection of the demand to subordinate women to their biological abilities. Even allowing for the influence of Pearson on Caird's work,⁴⁴ therefore, it is clear that her work develops from his ideas rather than aping them.

Caird demonstrably echoes Pearson's 'historical and evolutionary approach' in the middle section of 'Marriage', demonstrating that women were gradually taught over the centuries that their existence is relative to that of men, rather than based on their own identity as individuals. Her assertion that the 'possession' of women by men is a

Caird was 'rejected for membership' ('Science' 54), it is not clear whether Caird herself ever wished to join; Margaret Morganroth Gullette hypothesises that she felt that the club was 'too much interested in sexual liberation' and was moreover 'dominated by men' (522).

⁴⁴ According to the American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who during a trip to Europe spent a few days with Caird in late February 1888, Caird was 'then reading Karl Pearson's lectures on "Woman," and expounding her views on marriage, which she afterward gave to the Westminster Review, and stirred the press to white heat both in England and America' (409).

holdover from a time when hunters seized wives by force strengthens her argument that the 'nature' of woman is a cultural construct rather than biologically immutable (189). Blaming Martin Luther and the Reformation for modern views on wifehood (as discussed in chapter 1), she argues that the Christian interpretation of marriage dehumanises women to the point where they see themselves as 'wives' rather than 'humans', and she further argues that this view is crystallised in the physical symbolism that a woman's 'virtue' represents her status as a body owned by her husband: 'Woman's chastity becomes the watch-dog of man's possession. She has taken the sermon given to her at the time of her purchase deeply to heart' (193). Caird specifically pinpoints this in DOD, when Hadria, having left her husband, claims that she refuses to 'regard myself as so completely the property of a man whom I do not love, and who actively dislikes me, as to hold my very feelings in trust for him. [...] I claim rights over myself, and I will hold myself in pawn for no man' (351). Although Hadria never puts her theory into action, Caird indicates that as she does not consider her marriage to be more than a social conformity, her 'owned' status can be theoretically dispensed with. This contrasts strongly with the situation depicted by another New Woman writer, Catherine Martin,⁴⁵ in An Australian Girl (1890). Her heroine Stella marries the faithful Ted only after his sister commits duplicitous actions; these cause Stella to abandon her lover and marry Ted even though he is incapable of offering her emotional or mental intimacy. However, though it becomes clear that her only chance at happiness will be in returning to her lover, Stella decides not to leave Ted on the grounds that her happiness

⁴⁵ Catherine Martin (c. 1847-1937), Scottish-born Australian writer. For biographical information, see Sage 423-24.

as an individual is less important than remaining within her marriage: 'Because we have power to aspire to communion with God, so human beings have the power to fall and be submerged in the black eddies of shame and pollution. This was the embodiment of that principle of evil which everyone who turns away from the pitiful egoism of self-seeking must strive against—must fight to subdue' (433). The 'egoism of self-seeking' which Stella rejects is claimed by Caird as a woman's discovery of herself as an individual. Caird does not deny that such a relative existence is difficult to break, after generations of women have been trained to it; like Stella, for instance, Hadria is convinced to marry under false pretences, albeit a less melodramatic circumstance than Martin's tampered letters. She argues, though, that it must be broken.

Caird's solution to the problems of woman's unknown nature and her status as possession is the development of an 'ideal marriage'. This consists of two free partners—individuals who themselves determine the existence of their relationship, unhindered by 'any interposition, whether of law or of society' (198). By allowing the couple to determine their own rules for a relationship which concerns themselves alone, such a marriage offers space for the woman to discover her nature. Nelly in OTW (a novel published a year before 'Marriage') realises that this type of marriage is allowing her to develop as an individual: 'I have done nothing but drift all my life. I never feel as if I had a will or life of my own, except when I am with you; and then, although you influence me more strongly than anybody I ever met, you seem to bestow upon me a strange independence' (I: 209). The position of husband, codified in social custom and law as one of ownership (as will be discussed in chapter 4), paradoxically provides the

freedom for a woman's personal exploration.

The only way for such a system of marriage to work requires not only that the concept of duty (i.e. placing the rights of husband or society above one's own) be abolished, but in addition that the woman as well as the man must hold full autonomy: 'there must be a full understanding and acknowledgement of the obvious right of the woman to possess herself body and soul, to give or withhold herself body and soul exactly as she wills. The moral right here is so palpable, and its denial implies ideas so low and offensive to human dignity, that no fear of consequences ought to deter us from making this liberty an element of our ideal, in fact its fundamental principle' (198). Rather than ownership of one party by the other, both must be free to make contracts with each other, 'the State and society standing aside, and recognizing the entirely private character of the transaction' (198). However, for such a contract to work, each party must be free to make a contract, rather than being pressured into an agreement which restricts them to fulfilling an externally-decreed structure for their relationship.

The publication of Caird's ideas on this topic, and the initial response by the Daily Telegraph, indicate that she had tapped into a deep current of cultural anxiety. 'Marriage' was published in the radical Westminster Review, which had once been edited by Mill himself.⁴⁶ John Chapman had been editing the periodical since 1852, and in 1887 not only changed the format from quarterly to monthly, but began publishing 'shorter, more journalistic articles, many of which were written by obscure contributors publishing no more than one article' (Houghton 3: 552). As this appears to have been

the first piece Caird published under her own name,⁴⁷ she may well have been assisted by the change in editorial policy. The fact that the essay was included within the 'Independent Section', however, suggests that even Chapman did not want to align himself or 'the wicked Westminster' (as T.H. Huxley dubbed it) too closely to Caird's views. This section was reserved for 'able Articles, which, though harmonizing with the general spirit and aims of the Review, may contain opinions at variance with the particular ideas or measures it advocates'; contributors to this section were 'zealous friends of freedom and progress' whose views 'on special points of great practical concern' resulted in articles too different from the editors' views to be included without a disclaimer ('Marriage' 186). This section may in part have been a tactic by the Westminster Review to draw attention to a range of controversial ideas.⁴⁸ If so, it succeeded; according to the Pall Mall Gazette, the issue containing 'Marriage' was the first issue of the journal to sell out ('Free Marriage' 1).⁴⁹

Caird's attention to the problems of modern marriage was shared by other social commentators of her time. The 'Independent Section' of the Westminster's September 1888 issue included an article on 'Marriage Rejection and Marriage Reform' by

⁴⁶ For a historical account of the Westminster Review and a full listing of published articles, see Houghton, 'The Westminster Review, 1824-1900,' The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900 3: 528-705.

⁴⁷ Her first novel was published under the pseudonym G. Noel Hatton, and her second continued the pseudonymous attribution. There is no known work earlier than 'Marriage' for which she uses her real name. An 1891 biographical dictionary states that Caird 'had written much from childhood, and published a little anonymously, before issuing her first acknowledged work', but no anonymous work has yet been identified (Moon 156).

⁴⁸ A subsequent issue of the periodical placed an article on 'United Australia and Imperial Federation' in the same category, indicating that international political issues as well as domestic social topics were covered.

⁴⁹ Given that the journal had embodied radical opinion for over sixty years, such an accomplishment hints at the overwhelming public interest in the issue. However, without information about print runs, it cannot

Elizabeth Rachel Chapman.⁵⁰ That this was not a deliberate follow-up to Caird's essay is indicated by Chapman's statement in her collected essays, Marriage Questions in Modern Fiction, and other Essays on Kindred Subjects (1897), that her piece was 'accidentally, not designedly' a response to Caird's work (vii). Caird's position as a controversial voice within a topic already embedded in the cultural milieu is also suggested by the manner in which this issue was treated by the Daily Telegraph. Like other publications, the newspaper needed to fill space during the slow 'silly season' of late summer when Parliament was not in session. Its response to Caird's essay was not foregrounded, but included within a collection of several short pieces. The commentaries preceding and following 'Is Marriage a Failure?' discussed the acquittal of nineteen-year-old Sabina Tilley for the murder of her two infant children, and a commentary on declining attendance in the House of Commons and the third reading of the Parnell Commission Bill. These issues had clear topical relevancy, particularly as infanticide was very much a public social issue at this time.⁵¹ The placement of Caird's views on marriage within the pages of the Daily Telegraph can therefore be interpreted as a recognition that criticisms about marriage provided subject matter which the media responded to as part of public debate. At the same time, however, the fact that the response to her article was only part of a broader reaction to current events indicates that the newspaper did not recognise how significant this particular issue would be to their

be judged whether the sell-out was due entirely to a dramatic rise in readership, or whether fewer issues were published following the move to monthly publication which had taken place the previous year.

⁵⁰ It is not clear whether Chapman was any relation to John Chapman. A brief biography of her in a modern anthology of Victorian women poets indicates that little more is known about her than that 'she was born in Woodford, the daughter of a Yorkshireman and great grand-daughter of Elizabeth Fry' (Armstrong 717).

readers. Lyn Pykett claims that the newspaper published its response to Caird's piece in order 'to solicit readers' letters on the subject "Is Marriage a Failure?"', but there is no evidence within the commentary that the Telegraph selected Caird's work for that reason, or that they expected any more reaction to it than to Tilley's acquittal ('Women Writing' 92). (It is possible, of course, that the reputation of the 'wicked Westminster' influenced the newspaper's decision to trawl it for copy.) Therefore, while Caird's views had not arisen in a cultural vacuum, they were sufficiently radical to prompt not only an editorial response but a public outcry.⁵²

The first response came from the Daily Telegraph, which turned Caird's statement that marriage was a failure into a question they answered in the negative. Notably dismissive, the Telegraph's article, 'Is Marriage a Failure?', labels the author and her views 'peculiar' and 'amusingly lofty', her style as marked by 'female irony', and her solution to the 'the extremely difficult and very ancient problem' of marriage as light-hearted. More importantly, they accuse Caird of attempting to send humanity backwards; although the word degeneration is not used (except in quoting Caird's own work), the response implies that Caird's suggestions, far from developing the position of women, are in fact backward evolutionary steps, which if followed would result in 'a

⁵¹ The year 1888 alone saw three sensational cases involving infant deaths, one of which led to a murderer being hanged (Rose 113-14).

⁵² 'Is Marriage a Failure?' swiftly entered the collective consciousness, not only in Britain but overseas, being taken up in America in the pages of Cosmopolitan (Marks 51) and in Australia's Sydney-based Daily Telegraph (Magarey 44). Punch integrated the issue into the lives of the Pooters; see Flint, introduction to The Diary of a Nobody vii-xviii. Moreover, the issue became swept up as a merchandising craze, and games of all kinds were produced bearing the famous catchphrase. A marble game is discussed in a Pall Mall Gazette article, 'The "Marriage a Failure" Game'; a picture of this game is reprinted in Rosenberg, 'Breaking Out of the Cage' 12 (bound into the thesis as an appendix) An automaton is shown in Costa, Automatic Pleasures. A card game is listed in the catalogue of the British Library but appears to have been destroyed in the bombings of the Second World War.

system which is calculated to give the freest possible play to all the lower instincts of human nature, and to discourage the operation of all its higher impulses.' The article implies that by removing the social framework in which marriage exists, Caird is rejecting the entire system wherein animal barbarism has been tamed and civilised, and in which women have been offered the space to fulfil their 'natural' duties. The paper's greatest complaint with Caird's version of human development is her argument that women have moved from a position of freedom to one where their 'nature' was dictated to accept constriction: 'That which to most people appears a clearly traceable process of gradual emancipation for women, as man advanced from barbarism to civilisation, has struck Mrs. CAIRD as a change of the exactly opposite kind. Woman was once free, and is now enslaved.' In short, the Telegraph rejects what they see as Caird's argument that the great developments of civilisation have been, for women, little better than a descent into savagery.

That Caird's views and the Telegraph's response touched a chord with the public can be seen in the fact that over the next six weeks (from which date the Whitechapel murders dominated the news), the newspaper received more than 27,000 letters on the subject, from which they published many selections.⁵³ Later that year, Harry Quilter edited a volume containing letters representing many sides of the debate, as well as essays from other social commentators and a response from Caird herself, which allowed her to continue her side of the debate. In his introduction to the volume, Quilter emphasises that he has not been biased in his selection of letters, instead trying to ensure

that he has been representative of the opinions received. However, he also demonstrates his personal belief that marriage is fundamentally a social institution and must be judged as a success or failure on whether it succeeds as such: 'The protection of the weaker sex, the mutual well-being of husband and wife, the education and guardianship of their children, the necessary observance of social and political duty—these, and the various cognate points which social safety and progress require, are the objects with which the institution of marriage is mainly concerned, and for which it was founded' (8-9). The issue of whether marriage affects the people within the relationship, according to Quilter, is not the essential point; the purpose of marriage is not 'to produce specifically beneficial effects upon the character of those who come within its boundaries' (9), but rather to strengthen connections within the family and society: 'so long as society has the same necessities, and finds them fulfilled by marriage, the institution must be considered a success, though every married man and woman in the world were unhappy' (10). Caird, on the other hand, in her piece within Quilter's volume, once more makes a claim for marriage to be a state conducive to individual freedom and happiness, demanding 'that the pair shall frame their own contract, and not be forced to accept one whose terms they have had no voice in deciding'; society is only allowed to enforce that contract with 'as little interference with individual liberty' as possible ('Mrs. Caird's First Reply' 42). The actual letters provided by Quilter tend overwhelmingly to the particular rather than the general, displaying a wide range of circumstances in which specific marriages have or have not been failures, although there is a clear sense in the

⁵³ Punch, parodying the letters, determined that marriage was not a failure, given that the debate 'contrives to fill two or three columns every day' and thus allowed the paper to maintain its circulation in the slow

‘not a failure’ category to draw on the status of marriage as providing ‘the woman with the dignity—almost sanctity—of true wifedom and honourable motherhood’ (69).

Arguments against Caird’s ideas were not necessarily based on a complete rejection of her theories. Clementina Black’s article ‘On Marriage: A Criticism’ (1890), demonstrates how Caird’s views could be considered rational yet still reach the wrong conclusion. Black’s primary objection is to Caird’s contention (expressed in her essay ‘The Morality of Marriage’) that a woman who bears several children and ‘who struggles to cultivate her faculties, to be an intelligent human being, nearly always breaks down under the burden, or shows very marked intellectual limitations’ (313). Caird believes that this result needs to be altered, freeing the woman from the obligation to continue bearing children and instead to be able to work on her own intellectual or creative interests (313). Black, responding to this idea, places herself in the camp of those who believe that a woman’s individual development must be considered secondary to her maternity:

If I believed with Mrs. Caird that a woman by becoming the mother of more than three or four children, let us say, must become permanently disabled for the cultivation of her faculties, or for being an intelligent human being, then I for one should feel compelled, however regretfully, to say: “Perish the faculties and the intelligence rather than the children,” and I should, I fear, feel tempted to indulge in bitter and unprofitable complaints about the cruel injustice of nature towards women. (587)

While acknowledging that the situation is unfair, Black is unrepentant in her belief that women have a particular nature, and that the sacrifice of individual faculties on behalf of fulfilling that nature is a price that a woman must be willing to pay. The significance of

her response to Caird lies in her willingness to respond rationally — she does not (unlike the Daily Telegraph) accuse Caird of attempting to send humanity back to the Dark Ages with her ideas.

Some of the most ferocious responses to Caird's ideas came from Elizabeth Lynn Linton, whose anti-feminist stance had become particularly virulent by the late 1880s.⁵⁴ Linton's article 'The Philosophy of Marriage', published within Quilter's collection of letters, rests as strongly on a belief in and subsuming of the individual to society as Caird's ideas do on the individual's importance: 'The vital thing is that a man and woman marry with the consent and knowledge of their society, and that the children born of this authorised union belong emphatically to that society' (182). Although Linton goes on to claim 'love and personal harmony' as English traits, the example she gives of protected Ethel wishing to marry impoverished Charlie and slave for him in the wilderness, rather than accept dull Mr. Smith who will keep her in comfort, indicates that she rejects Ethel's personal fulfilment in favour of the girl being able to 'make

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Lynn Linton (1822-98), who also published as Eliza Lynn Linton and E. Lynn Linton, demonstrates a complex attitude towards the role of women. Having defied her father's wishes in moving to London, she pursued a professional writing career. In 1854, at the age of 32, she wrote a spirited defence of Mary Wollstonecraft—a dramatic political statement, given that Wollstonecraft had been erased from public discourse for most of the century (as discussed above). A modern biographer of Linton, Nancy Fix Anderson, cites the mid-1850s as the period in which Linton 'was making the transition from young rebel to middle-aged spinster,' noting that this corresponds to the period was when 'the question of women's rights was beginning to be debated in earnest' (70). Linton appears to have been dramatically uncertain about where to place herself within this expanding debate; in the same year as her piece on Wollstonecraft, she published an unsigned article in Household Words, 'Rights and Wrongs of Women', which positions the 'natural' woman in opposition to the 'emancipated' woman. Linton's attitude towards the latter implies that although women have instincts for dependence and domesticity, a woman who takes on the role of a man would separate herself so far from femininity as to be no woman at all. She later ranted against 'the Girl of the Period', rebuked modern women who 'leave the home and the family to take care of themselves, or under the care of some incompetent hireling, while they enter on the manly professions and make themselves the rivals of their husbands and brothers' ('Womanliness' 114), and sparred with Caird in the pages of the Nineteenth Century over the 'wild women'. In the end, Linton not only refused to identify herself with female emancipation, but turned against it completely, having

herself happy with realities' (187). While counselling pragmatism is not necessarily a blow to individualism, Linton sees Ethel's situation as a binary one: 'ease of living, a good social position, as many new dresses as she could possibly desire' is the sole alternative to being Charlie's 'self-neglecting drudge' (187). Under Caird's revisioning of marriage, Charlie and Ethel might between them redistribute the balance of labour, discovering for themselves which tasks each prefers rather than dividing strictly along gender lines. However, such a model would require both parties to be independent, a position Linton does not allow for; Ethel is a girl 'who cannot use her hands for rough or useful work any more than if she were the child in years she is in character and training' (186). This 'training', in Caird's view, would provide neither Ethel nor her husband (whichever man she chooses) with a satisfying life. Although Linton concludes that the 'individual must suffer for the preservation of society', her examples only serve to bolster Caird's point that training women solely to fulfil a domestic role leads to unhappiness (202). The fact that Ethel has been deliberately kept a child precludes her from being able to break out of her externally-dictated character, and Linton provides no evidence that Ethel's life will be happy for herself or beneficial to others.

While the response to Caird's article took many different tones—including, among those 27,000 letters, poignant personal stories—the majority of the responses were hostile to Caird's ideas. She herself divided the responses into respondents who failed to understand her argument, and 'those who understand what I mean to advocate, and either partly agree with me or wholly disagree (generally wholly disagree)' ('Mrs.

first, as she herself acknowledged, 'dipped her pen in gall' (qtd. in Anderson 190). For further biographical information, see the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 33: 940-42.

Caird's First Reply' 39). The multitude of responses, then, indicate that Caird was in a minority by diverging from a view that women had a particular role, and could best serve society and themselves by adhering to it, but that many people agreed with her view that marriage needed to change. Her ideas, then, were not outlandish social theories, but a thoughtful approach to the problems facing her society and a solution which promoted the ability of every woman to determine the best way to find happiness. The following chapters of this thesis will clarify Caird's views, outlining how distinct they were both from received opinion and from the work of other New Woman writers of the period, and explore in greater detail how she proposed to emancipate women both from their 'natural' role and from the state of 'marriage, as it stands' (40).

New Woman fiction and the nature of motherhood

The New Woman was arguably both a fictional and a cultural creation, manifested both in life and in the pages of novels and periodicals.⁵⁵ The literary representation, described in well over two hundred novels, offered a variety of opinions as to what New Woman should be, do, and become. Even within Caird's own work, the category of New Womanhood is shifting and unstable: Viola's quest for self-awareness in WOA brings her to the point where she can articulate her needs for personal autonomy and a fulfilling relationship, while Hadria is able from the beginning of DOD to pronounce her views to anyone who will listen; Nelly in OTW, in spite of denying that she holds any radical views, achieves both an ideal marriage and a friendship with

⁵⁵ Sally Ledger's 1997 study focuses on the value of the literary manifestations of the New Woman, going so far as to claim that 'the history of the New Woman is only available to us textually' (3).

her erstwhile rival, while the bitterness of Anna in POTG acts as a barrier to her ability to reach either of these goals. However, the thread that binds Caird's characters into a shared New Womanhood (or, in the case of Nelly and Viola, more of a proto-New Womanhood) is the implicit belief that a New Woman recognises and rejects the demand to adhere to a particular definition of gender based on interpretations of her biological sex. This section will examine the New Woman figure of two of Caird's contemporaries, Sarah Grand and Grant Allen, authors whose ideas and reputations made them equal spokespeople in the debate.⁵⁶ Establishing alternate forms of New Womanhood will help demonstrate how Caird's emphasis on individualism conflicted with, and challenged, the biologically-grounded beliefs of other New Woman writers.

Sarah Grand is credited with creating the term 'New Woman' in 1894, and her explanation indicates her belief that this figure possesses a specifically female nature: 'All I meant by the term "new woman" was one who, while retaining all the grace of manner and feminine charm, had thrown off all the silliness and hysterical feebleness of her sex, and improved herself so as to be in every way the best companion for man, and without him, the best fitted for a place of usefulness in the world' (Forbes 259). The sexes were in no way interchangeable: 'Woman was never meant to be developed man'

⁵⁶ That these three writers were public figures in their own time is indisputable. Caird, as indicated, had had her opinions distributed in two influential publications, but had been attacked for her opinions on marriage. The following year, the Pall Mall Gazette gave WOA a front-page review and predicted that 'it will be one of the topics of the year, and any one who goes out to dinner and has to confess that he has not read "Azrael" will be at a disadvantage at London dinner-parties during the coming season' ('Marriage and Murder' 1). Sarah Wintle opens her introduction to the Oxford Popular Fiction edition of The Woman Who Did with the observation that the novel 'was controversial from the start' and mentions that two years later, Mrs. Oliphant was referring to its twenty editions (1). Ann Heilmann, co-editor of a five-volume anthology of Sarah Grand's work, describes Grand as 'a best-selling writer whose opinion was constantly sought by the fashionable magazine market for her aptitude in setting public trends' (New Woman Strategies 114).

(Forbes 259). Woman's place, in Grand's ideal world, is a distinctly female place, and her hope was that society would change in order to develop that position, not to overturn it. For instance, she rejects the concept of a free marriage (the type of dissolvable relationship Caird proposes⁵⁷) on the grounds that the legal tie protects women, as it 'holds society together and makes her children legitimate' (Tooley 227). In her best-known novel, The Heavenly Twins (1893), Grand depicts situations in which women are restricted from fulfilling their 'natural' role largely because they become victims of unbridled male sexuality. Grand's partial answer to this social problem is to give women the knowledge they need to prevent themselves and their children from becoming sacrificed to venereal disease. Her character Edith, who as a girl prays to be kept 'from all knowledge of unholy things,' pays dearly for her ignorance, dying miserably from the disease transmitted to her by her noble but debauched husband (157). Her statement to her husband, her doctor, and the Bishop, as well as to young Angelica (one of the twins of the title), symbolises Grand's announcement to the world of established male privilege that she will no longer tolerate the sacrifice of womanhood: "“That is why I sent for you all,” she was saying feebly — “to tell you, you who represent the arrangement of society which has made it possible for me and my child to be sacrificed in this way”” (300). Grand intends to alter this 'arrangement of society', and her underlying reason for writing the work is to help other women, those who (unlike her primary heroine, Evadne) were unable or unwilling to seek forbidden knowledge. In

⁵⁷ In 'The Morality of Marriage' (1890), Caird argues that the sexes should be able 'to obtain divorce on the same grounds', objecting to the rule that men were able to divorce for adultery alone, while women had to prove incest, bigamy, or severe cruelty; see Shanley 39-44 (325). Caird also proposes 'contract-

an 1896 interview, for instance, Grand stated that while women under normal circumstances ‘should not seek to interfere with men’s private lives’, this must be done if the degradation of women is involved: ‘When the weaker of our sex are subjected to great wrongs we, as women, are bound to look after them’ (Tooley 222). Women, in her view, have a collective responsibility to other women and to society as a whole, and her novel manifests this ideal.⁵⁸

While critics frequently accused New Woman fiction of being social rhetoric rather than art,⁵⁹ Grand’s approach to her writing suggests that she consciously used her novels as a means of fulfilling what she considered to be her ‘natural’ and womanly role as a helper—serving other women in order to help free them. Such obligation to others supports her assertions that the suffering of individuals is necessary if it brings about benefit for the greater good. She argues this point in a review of Elizabeth Chapman’s Marriage Questions in Modern Fiction: ‘She [Chapman] recognises that individuals must suffer; but then individuals should suffer—they should glory in suffering and self-

marriage’ in which the members of the couple draw up the grounds of the relationship, and are able to dissolve it at will (325).

⁵⁸ A quotation in a brief article by Athol Forbes, ‘My Impressions of Sarah Grand’, hints at the depths of her desire: “‘Do you really think I have done any good in the world?’ she suddenly asked me, and no one looking into her earnest eyes could doubt the anxious sincerity behind the question’ (259).

⁵⁹ For instance, Fredric M. Bird’s review of The Heavenly Twins in the American magazine Lippincott’s was titled ‘A Three-Volume Tract’. The general categorisation of New Woman fiction as ‘problem novels’ or ‘novels with a purpose’ emphasised their reputation as being more concerned with fixing social ills than with making aesthetic or literary statements. Caird was dogged by accusations that her novels were political tracts rather than art, particularly after her third novel, WOA, was published within a year of the ‘Marriage’ controversy. In the preface to WOA, Caird claims that the novel’s purpose is ‘not to contest or to argue, but to represent. However much it fails, that is its aim. If anywhere temptation is yielded to and the action is dragged out of its course in order to serve any opinion of my own, if anywhere, for that object, a character is made to think or to speak inconsistently with himself and his surroundings, therein must be recognised my want of skill, not my deliberate intention,—the failure of my design, not its fulfilment. (I: x-xi) Caird is distinguishing here between the failure of art due to the lack of skill in the artist, and the failure caused when art is twisted to serve the purpose of propaganda. For modern critical discussions of Caird’s position in the art-versus-propaganda debate, see Ann Heilmann, introduction to The Late Victorian Marriage Question (vol. 5).

sacrifice for the good of the community' ('Marriage Questions in Fiction' 385). (The sacrifice of Edith and her child to the ravages of unbridled male sexuality, in contrast, weakens the community.) Emancipated women, in Grand's view, should not be working towards personal fulfilment or competing to take over men's roles; rather, they should be using their 'natural' purity to free other women. This includes raising men to their own level so that men no longer demand the sexual sacrifice of women. The distinctive nature of womanhood for Grand, then, is a potent means in and of itself for social change, and in her view women are obligated and inclined to use their natural roles for the good of others. Grand seeks equality, but it is an equality in which each sex upholds their own fixed position.

Like Grand, Grant Allen saw woman as possessing an essential 'nature' stemming from her biology. The writers' views diverged, however, as to how women should best fulfil the destiny of their natural role. Allen, a scientific journalist well-known for his promotion of Darwinian and Spencerian evolutionary theories, uses his novel The Woman Who Did (1895) as a way to promote the advancement of the race through the motherhood of healthy, intelligent women. Herminia's daughter is not simply the child of her love for Alan Merrick, but 'the baby that was destined to regenerate humanity' through her freedom from social restrictions and her acceptance that a woman's destiny is to be a mother emancipated from the slavery of marriage (Woman 92). Grand, however, dismissed Allen's novel The Woman Who Did (1895), in which Herminia Barton embraces motherhood but rejects marriage, as offering 'retrogression' and a return to 'the beast state' (Tooley 228).

Allen's 1889 article 'Plain Words on the Woman Question' begins with a statement that 'above all things it is necessary that that species or race should go on reproducing itself' (448)—which goal he places firmly on women, who 'must become wives and mothers, and must bear at least four children apiece' (449). Claiming that his belief about modern women is that 'I should like to see her a great deal more emancipated than she herself as yet at all desires', Allen defines his version of emancipation as being one which allows women to fulfil their 'main purpose in life' (452); it 'must not be of a sort that interferes in any way with this prime natural necessity' of producing children (450). A woman who rejects this claim is unsexed, and 'ought to feel they have fallen short of the healthy instincts of their kind, instead of posing as in some sense the cream of the universe, on the strength of what is really a functional aberration' (452). Though biologically female, such a woman is in Allen's view stripped of the element which makes her a woman—her desire to reproduce. Allen's emancipation for women, then, is the freedom to bear the children they naturally wish to produce. Society must do its part to ensure that women can accomplish this task, providing ease in all the other aspects of their life, and offering education suitable to this purpose: 'physically, morally, socially, and mentally, in the way best fitting them to be wives and mothers' (452). In Allen's opinion, motherhood was not only the best thing for the race, but for women themselves.

The Woman Who Did, Allen's most notorious novel, places his rhetoric in the mouth of a consummate New Woman, the Girton-educated Herminia Barton, who accepts both 'the orbit for which nature designed her' (59) and the premonition that her

life could not 'end in anything else but martyrdom' (42).⁶⁰ Her position as a woman is to live for others: her lover, her daughter, and other women. This does not make her a household drudge, underlining Allen's claim that women must be educated for their 'natural' purpose; during her relationship with Alan Merrick, Herminia teaches, and she supports herself and her child through writing after his death. In both cases she is upholding her independence and shunning any hint of being enslaved by social bonds, but at no time does her education or her career become a goal in itself. Her work is devoted to the good of her child.

Herminia's natural purity as a woman allows her to save Alan from the degradation of marrying, an act he would have committed because it is socially expected of him: 'It was her task in life, though she knew it not, to save Alan Merrick's soul. [...] She had power in her purity to raise his nature for a time to something approaching her own high level' (38). That level is one from which she sees the degradation of marriage. She refuses to undergo it, not only as her own personal statement but in order to make the path smoother for other women, to answer the 'one great question of a woman's duty to herself and her sex and her unborn children' (41):

⁶⁰ More than any other nineteenth-century educational establishment open to women, Girton College, Cambridge was a potent symbol of 'advanced' womanhood. Cambridge also had Newnham College, but this college simplified its course of study, whereas Girton required women to master the same educational accomplishments as male students. The fact that Girton students treated Newnham as 'some kind of poor relation they had vaguely heard spoken of' earned them the reputation of being superior and proud (Bennett 200). New Woman writers took Girton as a symbol of both this alleged superiority and as the pinnacle of 'newness'. Annie Edwardes' early New Woman novel A Girton Girl (1885) ends with the heroine marrying the man who tutored her for the entrance exams, rather than with her admittance to the college; although Edwardes reverts to a romantic ending, her heroine's quest for a Cambridge education offers an examination of what the new opportunities meant to young women. Elizabeth Lynn Linton's The One Too Many (1894) provides a deeply ambiguous examination of Girton-educated women; the 'good dear girl of a quiet English home' who is Linton's heroine watches helplessly as her husband becomes enamoured of a Girton graduate who can discuss the literature of which Moira has been kept ignorant, and she drowns herself, having become the 'one too many' of the modern world (I: 2).

I have wrought it all out in my mind beforehand, covenanted with my soul that for women's sake I would be a free woman. [...] I know what marriage is—from what vile slavery it has sprung; on what unseen horrors for my sister women it is reared and buttressed; by what unholy sacrifices it is sustained and made possible. [...] I must keep my proper place, the freedom which I have gained for myself by such arduous efforts. I have said to you already, "So far as my will goes, I am yours; take me and do as you choose with me." That much I can yield, as every good woman should yield it, to the man she loves, to the man who loves her. But more than that—no. It would be treason to my sex. Not my life, not my future, not my individuality, not my freedom. (42-43)

Separating biological necessity from social demands, Allen argues that only by casting aside the slavery of ownership will women be free to commit themselves to their lovers and children. Herminia's 'place' is the freedom to observe the social prison of marriage, and to use her understanding to rise above it and to endure the martyrdom which will inevitably follow. Allen's view that there is no way to incorporate marriage into New Womanhood thus diverges from that of Caird's argument for an altered version.

Although Herminia loves Alan, motherhood is her ultimate goal; her favourite picture is 'the Madonna bending in worship over her divine child, [...] a type of the eternal religion of maternity. The Mother adoring the Child. 'Twas herself and Dolly' (137). Lifting motherhood from a biological necessity into a religious observance, Allen allows Herminia to view both her maternity and her self-sacrifice as divinely-ordered. Herminia continues her martyrdom after Alan's death for the sake of their daughter, who she envisions as 'the first free-born woman ever begotten in England', and sacrifice becomes Herminia's final statement when she kills herself in order to allow her daughter to marry without having the taint of an living, unmarried mother (132). Her suicide could be viewed as a rebuttal of Allen's views, given that 'the baby that was born to

regenerate humanity' refuses her mother's vicarious martyrdom (133). However, the fact that Herminia dies in 'a fresh white dress, as pure as her own soul, like the one she had worn on the night of her self-made bridal with Alan Merrick', with the narrative comment that 'She was always a woman', indicates that her failure is not due to any defect in her 'natural' instincts, but rather the hypocrisy of society (140).

Direct responses to Allen's novel⁶¹ reveal a further splintering of the ways in which authors believed that a woman's primary goal was maternity, but proposed different ways in which to best achieve this while emancipating women. Though many of Allen's critics wrote novels depicting motherhood as an essential element of a woman's 'mission in life' (Cleeve 217), they did not necessarily reject marriage as antithetical to that role. For instance, Lucas Cleeve's⁶² rebuttal to Allen, The Woman Who Wouldn't (1895), argues that Herminia's torments stemmed from her 'divergence from the orthodox path mapped out by God and man' by rejecting marriage (viii). Where Allen sees modern marriage as slavery, claiming in 'Plain Words' that he does not wonder 'that independent-minded women should hesitate to accept the terms of marriage as they now and here exist', Cleeve views it as naturally ordained (457). Her heroine Opalia shares Herminia's instinct for martyrdom, claiming 'I am ready to sacrifice myself, if sacrifice it is' (9), in order to fulfil her 'dreams of reforming and purifying the world' (134), taking Josephine Butler's theories of sexual purity to a

⁶¹ These include Victoria Cross' The Woman Who Didn't (1895) and Lucas Cleeve's The Woman Who Wouldn't (1895), both of which took an equally serious approach to the issues. There was also a parody, Mrs. Lovett Cameron's The Man Who Didn't; or, the Triumph of a Snipe Pie (1895), in which all of Cynthia's high-minded ideals are scuppered not by her lover's virtue, but his baser instincts—namely, his love of snipe pie.

⁶² Pseudonym of Adeline Georgiana Isabella Kingscote (1860-1908). For biographical information, see Sage 136 and the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 31: 698.

higher level. Opalia initially demands marriage without sexual love in order to prevent herself from succumbing to its degradation. She instead seeks 'ideal, innate purity' for both herself and her husband (179). Opalia's martyrdom comes not through a rejection of marriage, but an acceptance of sexuality for the sake of her husband's physical needs (based on his own innate 'nature' as a man). Her reward is her child: 'all the degradation, all the expiation, all the suffering was wiped out, and that, in His infinite pity for the horrors of womanhood, God had provided a compensating joy, the exquisite, incomparable joy of maternity' (225).

Finally, Iota's⁶³ The Yellow Aster (1894) provides a warning to those who would promote intellectualism in women, which the author argues will damage—though never destroy—their innate maternal instincts. Mrs. Waring is described as 'an unnatural little bundle of scientific data' in comparison to another character who is lauded as 'a good wholesome creature made for a mother' (I: 54). Raising her daughter to be a modern-day Louisa Gradgrind, Mrs. Waring turns Gwen into an 'eerie little creature' (I: 58) who grows up believing that she is 'rotten at the core, a sort of Dead Sea apple' (II: 64). Iota reveals her belief, however, that the 'core' of a woman can never be truly crushed, for even Mrs. Waring's own maternal instinct eventually awakens, leaving her to mourn over baby clothes. The mental disintegration which precedes Mrs. Waring's death strips her of her artificially-acquired learning and leaves her in her 'natural' state as 'a careless, happy young mother playing with her first child' (III: 135). Gwen also sheds her intellectual artificiality, and for her it is not too late; she grows into her rightful

⁶³ Pseudonym of Katharine Mannington Caffyn (c. 1853-1926). For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 9: 439-40.

maternal place by subsuming her individuality into the needs of her suffering baby: 'As she fought desperately for the child's life, the girl, for the first time in her own, lost herself in supreme self-forgetfulness, and then at last the latent truth in her nature broke through its bonds and unfolded itself hour by hour' (III: 166-67). This is the 'ideal' maternal sacrifice—the complete abnegation of self which Caird rejects. The growth of Gwen's maternal instinct also brings her to a better understanding of her existence as a fulfilled woman: 'I am a woman at last, a full, complete, proper woman, and it is magnificent. No other living woman can feel as I do; [...] they slip into their womanhood; mine has rushed into me with a great torrent—I love my husband, I worship him, I adore him' (III: 172-73). The damage caused to Gwen, while repressive and painful, could not damage her essential nature. Although motherhood therefore represents different representations of New Womanhood to different writers, ranging from salvation to suicide, these examples demonstrate the consistent belief in this literary sub-genre that a woman's role in life was dictated by her physical ability to bear children, and that this provided an emotional fulfilment integrally related to her biological 'duty'.

These first two chapters have established Caird's major themes and her specific niche within the New Woman debates. The three chapters which follow will examine Caird's work, in particular the way in which her literary texts (supplemented by her non-fiction writings) set out her beliefs about the construction of the individual. This exploration will ascertain her specific approach to the construction of gender which, she argued, not only destroyed individualism but hampered the evolution of humanity.

Chapter 3: Sacrifice and the construction of the individual

'It is not a hopeless struggle, dear Viola, if once we realise the beauty and blessedness of sacrifice. That is the key to all the terrible problems of life; that alone makes us understand—if but dimly—that the highest good is to be got out of pain, and that the most blessed life is the life of sorrow.' - Adrienne Lancaster (WOA II: 163)

The theme of sacrifice plays an essential role in Caird's examination of the construction of the individual. Susan L. Mizruchi's concept of sacrifice as 'necessary to the maintenance of social order' offers a good starting point, for sacrifice is central to Caird's concept of the 'acceptable' behaviour of individuals within society.⁶⁴ Although sacrifices can be made by one person for the sake of another, Mizruchi claims that even this seemingly intimate interaction is grounded in the need to maintain social cohesion (22). To Caird, sacrifice—meaning the relinquishment of personal desires, individuality, or even one's life for the sake of others—is part of a historical continuum which has its roots in pagan practices and has become integrated into modern society.⁶⁵ Such sacrifice in her time and social milieu was cast as one's Christian 'duty'. This duty became lauded as a higher form of social responsibility than the selfishness which resulted from thinking primarily of oneself. Caird argues that society places this demand for self-sacrifice above personal relationships, and finds in general that

⁶⁴ Mizruchi's book The Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory (1998) explores 'the connection between American literature and social science' with an emphasis on 'a common preoccupation with religion and sacrifice' (5). Her ideas therefore provide a useful framework for an examination of Caird's own literary treatment of the social demand for sacrifice.

⁶⁵ Ann Heilmann contends that Caird 'invoke[s] mythology—Christian and classical'—as a means of historicising the social and sexual condition of late-Victorian women in relation to earlier patriarchal

sacrifice/duty is a powerful form of social control, serving as a way to pressure individuals to conform to acceptable roles.

In arguing against sacrifice, Caird contends that the rights of the individual are superior to the social demands placed upon them to suppress or attenuate themselves for others (although she does not deny the interconnected nature of society and the importance of relationships between people). In particular, Caird questions the ethical morality behind demands for the sacrifice of the individual in order to benefit others. Her discussions of sacrifice allow her to explore the relative positions of the individual and society, in an attempt to find the correct balance between responsibility to others and the desire to live in the manner best suited to the individual. Her goal is to determine how the individual can find personal happiness without being forced to sacrifice themselves for others, and to demonstrate how breaking the cycle of sacrifice will open the possibility of evolution on both the individual and the social level.

Some of the most prominent sacrifices in Caird's work are based on what she considers to be the social construction of gender, such as the demand for mothers to devote themselves to their children, and for sons to forego their desired careers when their families demand otherwise. She argues that such claims are shaped by social opinions about the motivations of each gender, which are based on their biological makeup; for instance, the belief that women have a 'natural' maternal instinct means that maternal dedication is integral to women, which in turn leads to the conclusion that the self-sacrifice of mothers is inherent in the physical ability to give birth. Yet although

structures, thereby bringing to light the legacy of their legal, theological, or cultural meta-narratives in shaping and constraining contemporary women's lives' ('Medea' 21).

Caird contends that different genders are required to make different sacrifices, she also takes a broader approach, one which focuses on the struggle of any individual against the social creed which demands self-sacrifice. This chapter will examine Caird's wider exploration of sacrifice, while the following chapters will integrate Caird's ideas about sacrifice specifically based on gender. There is of necessity some slight overlap between gender-related sacrifice and individual sacrifice, but a discussion of Caird's distinctly non-gendered views of sacrifice and its social implications will serve as a foundation for her ideas of how that sacrifice is then adapted to support claims about the socially-mandated roles of women and men. Importantly for the overall idea of this thesis, the non-gendered approach taken in this chapter establishes Caird's opinions about the construction of the individual. Her theories become more specialised with her examination of the construction of men and women as gendered beings, but by beginning with this wider view it is possible to build upon the ideas discussed earlier in this thesis. This approach is sympathetic to Caird's view that people are not integrally distinct from one another because of biological differences. Both men and women suffer from social demands for sacrifice.

The chapter will begin by examining Caird's belief that sacrifice is vicariously demanded for the benefit of others. The first part of this section discusses the historical and religious context in which Caird places sacrifice. She argues that contemporary emphasis on sacrifice indicates that 'modern' civilisation is still deeply rooted in primitive beliefs, and that, for instance, sacrificing young women on the altar of marriage and demanding they adhere to their Christian 'duty' is little different from

burning them alive. The modern version of this immolation is a death of the individual, which reduces (if not eliminates) their autonomy and nullifies their personality. The section then moves on to discuss the vicarious sacrifice of animals through vivisection, which becomes in Caird's view a means of deciding which living creatures should be forced to suffer for the benefit of others. She sees little difference between killing animals for the 'greater good' and the extension of this demand which results in the sacrifice of individual humans. In this way, her views on vivisection become a lens through which to view her beliefs on 'human sacrifice'. Both of these issues establish Caird's opinion that the 'greater good' cannot benefit through sacrifice, for any society which deliberately permits suffering will weaken its own moral sense.

The subsequent sections of this chapter analyse Caird's texts to determine her specific approach to the ways in which this demand for sacrifice damages the individual. The first demonstrates Caird's belief that the sacrifice made by one person for another, such as by marrying someone they do not love, damages both parties. The one who makes the sacrifice knows only too well what they have given up, and the other receives an attenuated partnership rather than a full-blooded relationship capable of growth. She also explores sacrifice for one's family, specifically that demanded of children, which causes them to be treated as possessions of their parents. Caird notes the illogical basis of social ideas which insist that women bear children through maternal instinct but then expect repayment for the act of producing those children. The love children have for their parents becomes twisted, Caird contends, because it develops into a way of ensuring that the chains of duty remain intact. This sacrifice also causes harm, for the

children who succeed in escaping tend to be damaged by the force needed to break away from the duty they have internalised, and those who do not go on to repeat the cycle, or die from their internal struggle.

The final section of the chapter discusses Caird's theories for eliminating the demand for vicarious sacrifice. In her view, the best way to break the cycle is to relinquish egotism: instead of demanding the sacrifice of others, people need to be willing to give up their insistence that others should commit sacrifice on their behalf. Caird sees voluntary renunciation of the demand for sacrifice as the best way to ensure happiness for all parties. By doing this, people help both others and themselves to secure the greatest possible rewards, and take an important step towards maintaining their value as individuals. They also open up the possibilities of widespread social development, particularly the evolution which Caird sees as contingent upon rejecting conformity to artificially-constructed roles.

The vicarious nature of sacrifice

Caird argues that the vicarious nature of sacrifice stems from its pagan roots, in which sacrifice was used as an attempt to propitiate the gods by forcing another creature to suffer in one's own stead, often for the 'greater good' of the community. It is also the root of Caird's anti-vivisection work, for she challenges the belief that the enforced suffering of an animal can be justified as beneficial to others. The explicit connections Caird draws between the sacrifice of animals and that of humans indicates the breadth of the scale she is working on: she is concerned not only with her own species, but with the

suffering and value of all living creatures.

Caird grounds her approach to sacrifice in a historical context which views modern civilisation as having retained some of the more primitive habits of previous eras. While Christian sacrifice, rooted in the crucifixion, calls upon people to renounce their desires in favour of their duty to others, Caird sees Christian sacrifice as a direct descendant of pagan sacrifice. In her essay 'The Emancipation of the Family' (1890), she claims that pagan sacrifice 'is one of the oldest [ideas] that is to be found in human history' (MOM/EOF 21).⁶⁶ This need for sacrifice is based on fear and a desire to deflect the anger of the gods by providing them with offerings: 'With our untutored ancestors, as with us, fear was the ruling motive of the worship; with them, as with us, sacrifice, human and animal, was the method of propitiation' (MOM/EOF 21). In SOS,⁶⁷ Caird uses the standing stones as both a literal and symbolic representation of the ways in which demands for modern sacrifice are identical to pagan ones:

The two [Alpin and Professor Owen] sat down in the dusk and silence, at the foot of the central altar-stone, where it was believed the blood of human victims had once flowed in sacrifice.

"Why did the priests make sacrifices?" asked the boy.

"To propitiate their God," the Professor replied. The idea appeared, he said, in all religions: the belief that one could ward off from oneself the anger of the God by offering up other victims

⁶⁶ Caird uses 'pagan' and 'Druid' interchangeably to discuss such practices. Whether the Druids did, in fact, practice human sacrifice is a matter of debate; according to Stuart Piggott, classical sources such as Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* imply that Druids were 'essential participants in such sacrifices, even if they did not carry out the murder of the victims with their own hands' (117). Caesar states that the 'most severe punishment' of the druids was to be banned from sacrifices, but also that 'they believe that unless one human life is offered for another the power and presence of the immortal gods cannot be propitiated' (128). Modern Druids argue that it was the Gauls alone who performed 'wicker man' sacrifices (see Carr-Gomm 57-59), but the multiple ancient sources cited by Piggott clearly indicate the direct participation of Druids in the deaths of humans.

⁶⁷ This is the novel in which Caird most extensively explores and foregrounds the issue of sacrifice, particularly through the use of the stones themselves, to which characters return throughout the novel. Prior to this work, she used the Biblical scapegoat as an extended metaphor for Viola Sedley in WOA.

in one's place. [...] "Very ancient and deep-seated human ideas are rather mean, my boy: and sacrifice is one of the most ancient and deep-seated. Whenever you hear anyone talk of sacrifice, no matter in what refined disguise, you will know that you are back at the very beginning of things. [...] The Sacrifice goes on age after age, though the Standing Stones are without their priests and flowing blood.....There are other Stones of Sacrifice and other Priests, and still the heart's blood flows in torrents over the secret altars...." (6-7)

The 'very beginning' is, for Caird, the primitivism that she believes humanity is capable of evolving beyond, but which continues to be used in modern society as a means of manipulating and restricting human development. Sacrifice is thus, as Mizruchi argues, 'not only a formal but an historical continuity', which Caird sees as linking the savage past and the 'civilised' present (23). By continuing to make sacrifice a central element of personal and social relationships, society remains trapped in a primitive framework, regardless of how 'civilised' it has become.

Christianity also embraced sacrifice, and a passage in SOS indicates the possibility that Caird believes Christianity is fundamentally little different from the paganism it claims to have supplanted:

"How do you expect them to distinguish between the doctrines of Calvinist Christianity and ancient Druid worship, if you go on like this?" she asked.

The Professor said he didn't see that there was anything to distinguish. (SOS 17)

Caird's relationship to Calvinism is unclear,⁶⁸ but this dialogue may be rooted in a

⁶⁸ As is noted on the entry about Calvinism in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, many Enlightenment thinkers came from a Calvinist background, including the 'first feminist' Mary Wollstonecraft (Kors I: 193). Although very little is known about Caird's background, it is evident that both her parents had Scottish connections; her father was from Midlothian and her mother, though born in Schleswig-Holstein (Gullette 520), was related to the sheriff of Galloway ('Marriage Rejoicings at Creetown'). Her only known statement about her upbringing was that 'the usual idea prevailed that a girl's only career was matrimony and a life of domesticity whether it suited her or not' ('Interview: Mrs. Mona Caird' 421). It is

rejection of the Calvinist belief that the individual can do nothing to affect whether he has been damned or selected as one of the elect. The decision of God in these matters is believed to be arbitrary and unfathomable to reason. As discussed in chapter 1, Caird can legitimately be placed within the Rationalist tradition of David Hume, and much of her fiction peels back layers of social tradition to reveal the illogic and savage realities beneath. In *SOS*, her repeated variants of the sentiment that the Gods demand sacrifice—even though no discernible happiness or purpose results—draws a contrast between the potential that humanity carries within itself and the capricious demands of God(s) who make decisions which people have no way to combat.

Although Caird equates pagan and modern sacrifice, she does not claim that the world has entirely failed to progress since the time of the druids. In general, her view of the development of recent civilisation emphasises advancement: ‘A century, after all, was not much more than one person’s lifetime, yet in scarcely nine of these—nine little troubled lifetimes—what incredible things had occurred in this island of ours!’ (DOD 162) The swift changes have not simply brought about changes in the landscape but in the manner in which people treat each other; Hadria notes that had such advancement not occurred, then rather than ‘browsing on salads, as we did to-day, we should be sustaining ourselves on the unholy nourishment of boiled parent or grilled aunt’ (DOD 163). In this respect, the basic relationship between human beings has altered to allow some respect for individual rights—if only the right not to be eaten.⁶⁹ Yet the shift from

therefore possible, but by no means proven, that Caird was raised in an atmosphere in which Calvinist ideas played a role.

⁶⁹ As Alpin sardonically quotes during an argument about natural selection: ‘We dined, as a rule / On each other: / What matter? / The toughest survived’ (*SOS* 232). Brutality can, by this rule, be excused on the

barbarism to civilisation has been neither unruffled nor complete; another character in DOD, the novelist Valeria du Prel, notes 'I have often noticed a sort of wildness that crops up now and then through a very smooth surface' (DOD 163). Sacrifice, for Caird, is one of the primary elements of the merciless past which has continued to exert influence up to the present time—a 'wildness' still making its presence felt even within modern civilisation—primarily through its transmutation into a form that makes it not simply a necessity, but a virtue.

Some of Caird's characters recognise that the essential nature of sacrifice has not changed. They are the voices in her novels who argue that sacrifice must not be demanded under its revised, modern definition of the self-renunciation 'owed' in duty to others. Sibella Lincoln in WOA bemoans the way in which Viola Dendraith has been pressured by her parents into marrying a brute. This character explicitly links pagan practices to modern social mores, rejecting them both: 'Her good devoted mother sacrificed the girl open-eyed, in the name of all that is sacred. It is interesting to remember that—for instance—Druid priests used to cram great wicker images with young girls and children, and then set fire to them,—also in the name of all that is sacred!' (III: 31) This outburst takes place within the context of a battle for Viola's future. Sibella, herself a victim to such sacrifice as a young woman, has become outcast from society for leaving her husband, and hopes to assist other women in the same position. Adrienne Lancaster, who later lives by her creed of sacrifice when she marries a man she does not love in order to save her mother from destitution, pleads with Sibella

grounds of being 'natural', whereas Caird argues that civilised people should have long advanced beyond this type of interaction.

to keep her dangerous ideas away from Viola, who is being torn between her 'duty' and her freedom. The conversation represents the viewpoints of one person who sees no difference between pagan and Christian sacrifice, and one who cannot imagine any connection between the two: 'What has this to do with what we are speaking of?' Adrienne cries after Sibella makes her wicker man comparison (III: 31), later denying the comparison entirely (III: 34). Such characters, then, offer a way for Caird to set out her comparisons of ancient and modern sacrifice, drawing out the parallels of the situations and demonstrating her contention that 'civilised' behaviour rests on pagan beliefs.

In Caird's view, while sacrifice in Christian terms is seen to benefit the one who sacrifices, allowing them to gain in sacredness by relinquishing their personal desires for a 'higher good', in fact it destroys their individual personalities. Leonore in WNL, for instance, feels her creative abilities stifled by her domestic duties. She has tried to fulfil her obligations to her family, but finds that the struggle to be both an artist and a housewife brings her to stultification:

all emotion seemed to ebb away, like a retreating tide, leaving her aimless, hopeless, fearless, without a thought in her head or an emotion in her heart. She sat gazing fixedly and stonily out into the night, conscious only of this strange absence of sensation. She tried to shake it off, half wondering if she were ill, or if her mind had given way. (III: 301)

All that has made her uniquely Leonore has vanished in favour of her enforced identification with a generic identity of 'wife and mother'. Although her social circle applauds her for devoting herself to this role, the sacrifice of her artistic nature only drags her down to a level where she loses both her personal identity and her desire to be

a fully emotive human being. In WOA, Adrienne Lancaster lauds the happiness of marriage by raising the virtues of sacrifice within marriage into a sacrament, extolling ‘how sacred an office it may be; how a woman may serve and minister, and make her life one long, lovely self-sacrifice’ (II: 159), but this view ignores the realities of the marriages of characters such as Leonore and Viola, in which self-sacrifice leads only to despair.

Viola’s subjection to implied physical abuse and explicit emotional torture, as well as frequent reminders from her husband that her identity as a wife is merely an appendage to his own,⁷⁰ demonstrates Caird’s belief that adherence to strict Christian ‘duty’ provides a slower and more drawn-out death than that provided by immolation in a wicker man—but a death through sacrifice all the same. Having undergone her honeymoon and the return home to become mistress of Upton Castle, Viola understands why Harry Lancaster (the man who offered to elope with her to prevent her marriage from taking place) ‘had said that he would rather see her lying dead before him than married to Philip Dendraith’ (II: 114). As will be discussed in the next chapter, Philip’s violence towards animals acts as a symbolic representation of his brutality towards his wife, and Caird indicates that it is Viola’s ingrained sense of duty which keeps her in her place in spite of her husband’s cruelty: ‘The sense of duty, desperately as it had been assailed in this hurricane of horror and disaster, still held firm, and still the poor mummied religion which had been offered to this passionate heart for a guide, held up a

⁷⁰ When Philip forbids Viola from associating with Sibella Lincoln, he is unconcerned with whether Sibella deserves her social disapprobation, caring only for how her exclusion would reflect upon himself: ‘I merely explain to you that to associate with her is to take the bloom off your own reputation, and I have no notion of possessing a wife in that bloomless condition’ (III: 16).

withered finger of exhortation. [...] Without the belief that it was right to endure all that she endured, it would have been literally impossible for her to live her life for another day. That gave it—even it!—a sort of consecration' (II: 114). That Viola has come to believe that she must endure sex for the sake of her mother's religious duty is, to Caird, unendurable and unconscionable suffering. Viola's 'passionate heart' is, for most of her marriage, crushed by her required sexual submission and the dominance of her husband.

Thomas Hardy, in Jude the Obscure (1896), uses a similar concept of Christian duty and sacrifice to portray the destruction of his New Woman character Sue Bridehead. Hardy's use of Christian tenets is more explicit than Caird's symbolism, but the two authors provide a similar tension between internal promptings and an external code of behaviour, and the way in which a belief in sacrifice is so ingrained in women as to be reverted to in times of emotional stress. The deaths of Sue's children at the hands of Jude's son prompt her to reclaim both the religious obligations she had previously scorned, and her position as Phillotson's wife. Believing that her individuality led to the deaths of innocents, her only possible expiation is its ruin: 'We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty! But I have always striven to do what has pleased me. I well deserved the scourging I have got! I wish something would take the evil right out of me, and all my monstrous errors, and all my sinful ways!' (362-63)

However, as Caird shows through Leonore, removing one's individuality only leads to personal diminishment. Hardy similarly indicates this through 'the self-sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles' (388). Sue, on her second wedding day to Phillotson, 'appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly

done' (389); by the end of the novel she has dwindled into 'a staid, worn woman', clinging to her 'duty' at the expense of the vibrancy and individuality that has characterised her throughout the novel (430). By sacrificing herself to her previously abhorred concepts of Christian marriage—including the inherent sexual submission of being 'licensed to be loved on the premises'—Sue creates of herself a vicarious offering (272).

Caird's context for sacrifice, then, is rooted in the belief that, humanity has failed to evolve past the need to demand the suffering of others and that this damages individuals. In her work, she not only demonstrates why continuing the demand for sacrifice prevents any further development (on the individual and the social level), but provides some theories on how sacrifice can be adapted to become beneficial for future growth.

The sacrifice of animals

Caird makes explicitly clear in SOS that she considers the underlying ideals behind the torture of animals through vivisection no different than the torment and sacrifice of people. Specifically, she rejects the belief that it is acceptable to demand the suffering of others in order to prevent one's own suffering. Alpin comes to realise that the theories he has been objecting to in political form through his association with a socialist group are the same ideas he has been fighting in his personal life. This began in childhood, when he learned about the hypocrisy of the social ideals which killed his mother; she was praised for remaining within a brutal marriage and condemned for

escaping it. While this situation has seemingly little connection to the vivisection of animals, the comparison reveals the root of Caird's beliefs:

Vicarious sacrifice; that was the long and the short of it: the same hideous idea that had set up those grey old stones on the moors above Culmore; the same idea that still was torturing many a martyred soul to this day. It lay at the root of the vivisector's doctrine, as of course one had always realized. But one had not realized that it lurked also in the heart of most socialist dogma. In the foreground, a sincere, nay a passionate concern for human welfare; at the back of it all, a steely resolve to seek that welfare at the cost of no matter what martyrdom to any being weak enough to be made the scapegoat for the people's sins. (179)

This 'welfare at the cost of...martyrdom' underpins Caird's anti-vivisection arguments, which reveal her belief that enforced suffering on sentient animals cannot be justified any more than can the victimisation of weaker humans (see chapter 5 for Caird's repudiation of the 'might makes right' argument).⁷¹ It is also, in Caird's view, the foundation of contemporary opinions on the 'natural' role of women.

This concept of one creature suffering in order to succour another, an adaptation

⁷¹ Whether vivisection should be stopped entirely, or whether it would be more sensible to work for its regulation to prevent as much animal suffering as possible, caused a major schism in the British anti-vivisection movement in 1898. When the National Anti-Vivisection Society decided to work for restriction rather than abolition, founder Frances Power Cobbe and others broke away to form the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV). Caird's position following the split is not entirely clear; she wrote both for the NAVS ('The Inquisition of Science', 1903) and for groups who were clearly oriented towards the ideology of the BUAV ('The Ethics of Vivisection', 1900, published by the Society for the Abolition of Vivisection). An examination of the journals in which Caird published indicates a willingness to write for audiences who were already committed to anti-vivisection (such as publications associated with organised groups) as well as for readerships who did not necessarily have any particular stance or committed interest in the issue. Some of her publications were letters which had been written to diverse magazines and newspapers, or even individuals; these were then reprinted and distributed as pamphlets, so that her views were disseminated to the general public. (The Ewart Library, Dumfries has a collection of pamphlets dated between 1910 and 1918, with titles including 'Is it Right to Vivisect Animals?', 'The League of Nations Union and Vivisection', 'A State-Supported Cruelty', 'Sacrifice: Noble and Ignoble', and 'Vivisection as a Test Question at Elections'; these generally lack specific publication information.) The breadth of publications Caird wrote for, particularly non-specialist periodicals, indicates that she considered adherence to a strict ideological line less important than alerting as wide an audience as possible to the true cost of vivisection. Therefore, although her work indicates a horror of vivisection, her appearance in pro-regulation periodicals does not contradict this position.

of the sacrifice of animals in order to deflect divine punishment, forms the basis of Caird's arguments against vivisection. She questions why it is considered acceptable to cause animals to suffer for the alleged benefit of humanity, and how 'the hope of gain' could 'sanctify the deed' ('Sacrifice' 1). In 1789, Jeremy Bentham argued in An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation that the inclusion of animals within what Marian Scholtmeijer calls 'the moral community' (39) should not be made because of their similarities to humans on an intellectual level, but instead on their ability to feel pain: 'the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?' (qtd. in Scholtmeijer 39). Caird anthropomorphosises some of her animal characters to the extent of translating their 'speech' — the poodle Bill Dawkins in WOA, for instance⁷² — but it is animals' ability to suffer for the 'necessity' of humanity which provides the focus of her attention. That ability to suffer entitles them to what Caird describes in her essay 'Ethics, Science and Vivisection' (1902) as 'the first, most elementary right which any living creature can possess, viz., the right not to be made the victim of deliberate and organised torture' (6).

Caird rejects the idea that any suffering can be 'necessary' if it is forced by one group onto another with the alleged motivation of 'concern for human welfare'. In her essay 'Sacrifice: Noble and Ignoble' (c. 1910-18), she responds to a letter which has challenged her previously stated views on the issue. According to the correspondent, Caird's objections to the practice of vivisection 'apply just as much to necessary or

⁷² The dog contributes to the painful conversation in which Viola asks the gardener why he is tearing down her sacred grove: 'Bill Dawkins barked aggressively at the destroyer with his tail erect, exactly as if he were saying, "On behalf, sir, of this young lady, I demand an explanation."' The indirection soon

important as to arbitrary or needless experiments' (1). Caird clarifies her position by denying that any experiment conducted on animals can be considered 'necessary'. She uses Fyodor Dostoevsky's murder of the pawnbroker in Crime and Punishment as a parallel example of an act which might admittedly have short-term advantages but nothing more, for denial of morality can never lead to advancement: 'I do not allow for a moment that a great crime is necessary, whatever be its object, nor indeed that any gain would be made, in either case, in the long run. Real progress does not and cannot come through defiance of the moral sense, nor do States continue to prosper when the nobler instincts of their citizens become increasingly blunted and distorted' (3). To make animals suffer on the grounds of 'benefit to humans' lessens humans by making them become insensitive to the impact of pain, and allowing them to think that causing pain is a noble act. In fact, causing pain is brutality and leads only to a return to savagery: 'Why should we not tear our malefactors to pieces, burn, mangle, torture our enemies or our heretics [...]? Why should we not amuse ourselves by watching the agonies of expiring gladiators or by tormenting slaves or prisoners of war?' (4). To absolve cruelty as being 'natural' — much less raising it to a beneficial act — removes humans from their position of 'divine instincts of mercy and benevolence', reducing them to little better than agents of brute and stupid force (4).

The concept that causing suffering would cause people to degenerate morally was held even by those who supported vivisection. In her essay 'The New Priesthood'

vanishes in favour of actual representation of speech: "'Explain yourself, sir," barked Bill Dawkins' (I: 65).

(1893),⁷³ Ouida⁷⁴ argues that vivisection is ‘necessary for the pursuit and development of knowledge’ (3). However, she goes on to claim that vivisectors—who she compares to torturers of the Middle Ages—become morally abased through their work:

Think of a practical physiologist [...] keeping the tortured and mutilated creatures beside him week after week, month after month, refusing them even the comfort of a drop of water, if thirst will increase the “interest” of his experiment; think of him, eating and drinking, jesting and love-making, filling his belly and indulging his desires, then returning to his laboratory to devise and execute fresh tortures, his hands steeped in blood, his eyes greedily watching the throes he stimulates; think of what his daily and yearly existence is, and then judge if he be fit to consort with men of gentle temper and decent habitudes, or if he and such as he, be fit to be trusted with the care of sick and suffering humanity. (13-14)

The loss of compassion Ouida describes parallels Caird’s theories on a return to savagery, for the vivisector not only wallows in his own pleasures through sensual means, but uses the sufferings of his laboratory creatures as a further means to that end, as depicted by his penchant for ‘greedily watching’ and the blood in which he drenches himself. Committing the act of vivisection itself damages a person. Even though illnesses could be cured through dissection and medical experimentation—even a problem as nugatory as a finger-ache, a commonly used example in anti-vivisection rhetoric—Caird denies that this result is worth the moral degeneration that results.

In her article ‘Why I Am An Anti-Vivisectionist’ (1900), Caird uses a dialogue format to explore conflicting arguments about vivisection’s benefits to humanity.⁷⁵ Her

⁷³ Ouida’s title indicates the connections—also drawn by Caird—between Druid priests and the ‘priests’ of science.

⁷⁴ Pseudonym of Marie Louise de la Ramée (1839-1908). For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 45: 894-96.

⁷⁵ Whereas her articles generally express her own opinion and reject others, the dialogue format allows her to structure a debate, providing all the arguments in favour of vivisection followed by explanations of why

format allows her to argue directly against one of the most pressing contentions of the pro-vivisection lobby—that humans can dictate the suffering of others by establishing a hierarchy of virtue. In such a situation, those who hold power feel they have the right to decide which weaker creatures are expendable:

“Then you think it right, and likely to be eventually for the all-round good of humanity, that we should establish an elaborate system whereby animals—to whom we stand almost in the position of omnipotent deities—are dissected alive, in order that we may try to wring benefits for ourselves out of their anguish? You think that will have a good effect upon the general tone and sentiments of the public?” Her glance betrays the natural contempt of the judicial mind for any taint of enthusiasm.

“That sounds all very well, but, after all, men and women are more important than animals, and we must make use of them when necessary.”

“‘Importance’ is rather a vague term, and so is ‘necessary,’” I suggest. “For certain purposes, any deed might be ‘necessary,’ murder not excepted, but the question remains always, is it justifiable? Then, you still have to explain whether you think the possession of the blessed quality of ‘importance’ is in itself a good excuse for ill-treating any sentient being happening to be less ‘important.’ A great statesman, for instance, is incomparably more important than an idiot or a child. May the statesman therefore seek his own good, if he thought it obtainable, by torturing the idiot or the child?”

My friend remarks that “That is quite different,” and appears to think the answer all-sufficient. (73)

it will lead to more complex moral dilemmas. This article offers a debate between a narrator expressing logical anti-vivisection arguments and ‘an amiable-looking, well-dressed woman, with good features, and a high, unbiassed [sic] voice’ who claims ‘I always like to hear both sides of a question’ (72). That the piece was published in *The Animals’ Friend* indicates that it is intended to be less of ‘a slight account of my reasons for my faith’ (as claimed by the narrator) and more of a way to offer practical suggestions to an anti-vivisectionist who, in spite of strong personal belief, might not easily be able to respond articulately to the logic of an opponent who is ‘the most steadfast believer in vivisectional methods to be found among the general public’ (72). Lyn Pykett’s contention in her article ‘The Cause of Women and the Course of Fiction: The Case of Mona Caird’ (1995) that Caird is ‘the classic case of the New Woman writer as both campaigning journalist and fictional polemicist’ can perhaps be even better applied to essays such as this one than to her fiction. Around the turn of the century, Caird wrote ‘The Logicians: An Episode in Dialogue’, which was not available for consultation but indicates that she explored dialogue as a useful format for expressing her views.

Caird, however, does not see the situation as 'quite different'. Women were, as Frances Power Cobbe noted in 1868, classed with criminals, idiots, and minors in their legal treatment; even though the situation had improved by the turn of the century, Caird is perceptively pointing out that any hierarchy which raises some and demotes others reaches a logical conclusion: that the lower ranks may be sacrificed to the 'good' of the higher. If it is done to animals, it may be done to people, whether on the grounds of sex, physical ability, or alleged value to humanity. A society that approves of torturing animals, even in the name of 'research', has at its very root an approval of causing suffering to those who are weaker, and causes the danger that humanity will in fact degenerate to the extent that any weaker creature will serve to fulfil the need to cause 'necessary' suffering. As hinted at in her example of the murder of the pawnbroker in Crime and Punishment, Caird asks why this issue of weakness allegedly ceases at the division between species. Ouida also takes up this theme, emphasising that 'There is not a single argument used by the advocates of vivisection which will not apply in as complete an entity to human, as to animal subjects' and that, therefore, objections to vivisection are self-defence (61; emphasis in original). Vivisection in Caird's view becomes the culmination of such atrocities, 'the new Religion: the Survival of the Fittest: primitive savagery made into a cult' (SOS 236). Far from being the pinnacle of human development, vivisection heralds a return to brutality without reason. It is ominous that the opponent in Caird's dialogue refuses to use her own rationality to consider the issue.

For Caird, the 'religion' of Darwinism is an excuse for brutality, with the 'Priests

of Science' acting as 'lineal descendants' of the druids who claimed their right to judge who should commit sacrifice and who should be the 'tortured propitiatory victims' (SOS 310). Mizruchi claims a connection between sacrifice and Social Darwinism, arguing that the latter 'caught on among theologians in part because it accorded with this major religious practice and philosophy' (160). Caird offers a similar link by arguing that vivisection has become not simply 'medical advancement' but a modern religion grounded in torture, and one in which there is no reason not to extend its 'benefits' to the sacrifice of humans. She demonstrates this in SOS, where the Professor sets up a scenario which seems logically to demand human sacrifice: the dissection of a dissolute man by a benevolent vivisector who wishes to use this death to benefit thousands of people. The only rational argument against allowing this seems to be the dissolute man's capacity for suffering. Yet, argues the Professor, this very reason 'forms our sole bulwark against a return to savagery' (247). Caird's 1913 speech to the Personal Rights Association clarifies the point that individuals have rights that cannot be taken away on the grounds of 'duty to others': 'If Science demands human vivisection, he must submit even to that outrage. On what principle, except that of personal rights, can the demand be refused? The outrage might result in valuable knowledge' ('Personal Rights' 9). Only by demonstrating compassion for suffering will humanity be able to express 'progressive human consciousness' which 'indicates the rank in evolution, measuring the tide-line above the merely primitive' (247).

By linking the sacrifice of animals with that of humans, and arguing that the suffering of even one person is unjustifiable, Caird demonstrates her belief that if the

whole demands the sacrifice of one of its parts, everyone is weakened. She denies that any creature—human or animal—should be forcibly harnessed to work towards a single unified goal. Their suffering is judged by others to be an acceptable sacrifice, which deprives both the individual (the ‘unit’ discussed below) and the victims of vivisection of their individual rights and personal integrity. A lecture attended by Alpin in SOS encapsulates these ideas:

It was the key to the riddle of Life. Live for the All, the Great Consummation for which human existence, in its diversity and multiplicity, was created. [...] In Nature, be it observed, the Many were of no account. It was the One, the Unity for which she ceaselessly worked and destroyed—but only in order again to create. [...] What did Nature care for the seeds which she scattered in millions to rot in the ground in order that the survival of the species might be insured? What heed did she take of the multitudinous life of beast and bird and the teeming swarms of insects? (Alpin gave a grim smile.) Did each microscopic entity live for its own crawling little sake? No: it lived only as an infinitesimal part of a vast and majestic WHOLE. (193)

The speaker of this lecture casts Nature in the same position as a pagan priest or vivisector—an omnipotent being who has the right to determine which people can be wasted, discarding them if they decide that society or the race might advance by their suffering. By claiming that all individuals can be subsumed into a greater good, no individual has any inherent worth.

By drawing the natural world into her argument against sacrifice, Caird shows that her views are not simply a matter of speaking out for animals killed in the name of science or women brutalised in marriage, but against the broadest possible concept of the demand for sacrifice. Claims that sacrifice is a ‘law of nature’ only serve to obliterate the rights and value of individual. In Caird’s view, then, vicarious sacrifice on

all levels damages the ability of the human race to develop.

Sacrifice through relationships

Sacrifice at the most personal level involves a person who gives up their own happiness so that they can prevent another person from being hurt. Caird provides many examples of this throughout her work, demonstrating particular concern about people who sacrifice their personal happiness by marrying partners for whom they are not suited. Caird views this as a tragedy for both parties, and potentially for others as well, for although her ideal marriage allows for the highest possible happiness, marrying out of self-sacrifice leads only to suffering for all concerned. At best, the person sacrificed for remains ignorant of the true nature of their marriage, but the lack of sympathy between the married partners will cause problems even without that explicit knowledge. For the partner who knows exactly what they have given up for the marriage, the result is almost unbearable, leaving them incapable of fulfilling their personal destiny.

Leonore in WNL knows that marriage to Austin Bradley would allow her to find the full measure of her potential: 'His influence was invigorating; his presence doubled every pleasure, and added new zest and brilliancy to existence; it was like music stealing through the silence of a cathedral, sunlight upon grey waters. Leonore felt as if she had never lived till now. The spirit of a great ambition brooded over her, widening the boundaries of life with a haze of possibility; the breath of genius seemed whispering in her ear, and a sense of power—vast, all-embracing power—came piercing like a sword-blade to her consciousness' (II: 269). Not simply happiness, but Leonore's

greatest possible accomplishment and the deepest appreciation of life is achievable within this relationship. In spite of this knowledge, however, Leonore feels unable to release herself from the obligation she feels to George Meredith. Not only is he in love with her, but she implied that she reciprocated his feelings: 'Had she forgotten George? did she mean to do away and leave him lamenting, him whose admiration she had deliberately and only too unnecessarily courted?' (I: 218). Although Leonore is guilty of little more than being, in her own words, 'a real downright flirt, confirmed and heartless', she cannot bring herself to injure George. The only solution she sees is to sacrifice her potential happiness with Austin and instead prevent George from suffering (II: 176).

Leonore's decision is made primarily out of personal guilt, rather than because of direct pressure from family or neighbours. Caird indicates that Leonore is spared much of the social training that her later heroines go through, as will be explored in the next chapter.⁷⁶ Leonore's motivations are therefore less influenced by her society than, say, those of Hadria in DOD. This character is set upon by friends and her future sister-in-law, who ply her with reasons why marriage to a man whose ideals do not match her own will be mutually beneficial, and whose decision to accept him is partly influenced by the desire to behave acceptably towards another person: 'It was so hard not to believe when some one insisted with such certainty, with such obvious sincerity, that everything would be right. He seemed so confident that she could make him happy, strange as it

⁷⁶ In general, Leonore (Caird's first heroine) is less complex a character than subsequent protagonists, and WNL's exploration of the nature of sacrifice provides less depth than later works come to develop. However, it is significant that even in Caird's first novel, the idea of a person feeling an obligation to give up happiness in order to prevent the unhappiness of another person plays an important role.

appeared. Perhaps after all—? And what a release from the present difficulties. But could one trust? A confused mass of feeling struggled together. A temptation to give the answer that would cause pleasure was very strong, and beneath all lurked a trembling hope that perhaps this was the way of escape' (141). The social pressure to sacrifice oneself to another person's happiness leads Hadria to believe that this will also be the way to her own happiness—a belief systematically destroyed in the remainder of the novel.

Caird's 1891 novella A Romance of the Moors (AROTM) offers Caird's most focused study of the sacrifice made by one person to marry another, foregrounding the external pressures that make personal sacrifice a social concern. Dick's realisation that he must marry Bessie, having unintentionally placed her in a compromising position, indicates this mixture of motivations: 'in the code of Dedborough—nay, in his own unconsidered code, he was bound to her now in honour' (62-63). As with Leonore, Dick's position is partially due to his own thoughtlessness. He had previously flirted with young women to whom that act meant no more than harmless fun. Bessie, however, considered his actions to be grounded in a deeper meaning, one which involves symbolic representations of the relationship they must now have to one another: "'Oh! it's not the first time,'" Dick admitted shamefacedly; "but before, the girl meant no more than I did; but this time she expects church-bells, wedding-ring, silk gown, and all the rest of it. And my parents want it, and her uncle and aunt—there is no escape. I must go through with it'" (70). Dick's previous dalliances were ones in which the individuals determined their own relationship and, as a result, neither person felt demeaned, or

demanding a social framework in which to justify their behaviour. Bessie, however, begins AROTM believing that her flirtation with Dick must exist within a particular social framework. This requires a marriage which would be both an expiation for Dick's carelessness and a conformity to proscribed sexual behaviour.

If Dick refuses marriage, the cost to Bessie will be great, not only because of her personal disappointment but because the community will turn her private grief into a public spectacle: 'every one hereabouts would say that I had behaved shamefully, if I did not marry her now. You should have heard what was said about a man who did the same thing last year to the baker's daughter in Winterbridge' (71). That 'every one' has the right to comment on the matter emphasises that this relationship is a community affair. Dick could—as the artist Margaret Ellwood advises—refuse the sacrifice of marriage without love, but in doing so he would injure both Bessie and the community. That he understands that he cannot in good conscience jilt her and escape his 'duty' is, to Caird, an acknowledgement that he must take responsibility for his actions and their effect upon others, even though the sacrifice will attenuate his own life.

This type of sacrifice forms part of a cycle through which the community maintains its existence and cohesion. In marrying, Dick will be limited to a narrow existence, but this would not be seen as a personal tragedy; rather, he would be kept within boundaries that have been in place for generations: 'You have erred, and you must suffer. You have promised, and you must fulfil. If you have had visions, so have others before you, and they had to fade. The work of the world has to be done. You must be as your fathers have been before you, and for that you must marry a simple wife, who will

hold you to your life's end with a force greater than hunger, or thirst, or ambition, or hope, or genius itself' (64). Even a man such as Dick, whose education marks him for a more intellectual life than could be found in rural Yorkshire, will not be able to break out of this pattern, in spite of his intellectual abilities and his 'passion for life' (31). The pressure to sacrifice oneself in order to conduct 'the work of the world'—marrying and having children who will continue the cycle—is not brought about only by one's own immediate society, but by the fact that previous generations did the same. Why should Dick, even though he is a unique individual, feel himself privileged to defy what his ancestors had all seen fit to accept? Caird's belief in the importance of the individual shows that he must defy it; however, the only way he can escape is for Bessie to advance beyond the need to demand his sacrifice to her. Without her development, Dick has no option but to become yet another young man bound to the community's demands. The specifics of Bessie's change and her release of Dick will be discussed at the end of the chapter, in the section detailing Caird's solutions to the problem of socially-demanded sacrifice.

Although the vivisector or the druid priest cares nothing for causing pain, even revelling in it (as Ouida indicates), Caird believes that people are capable of understanding that situations of sacrifice will cause pain to others. In SOS, she demonstrates the tension caused when potential sacrifice clashes with a desire for personal happiness, through her close examination of a love triangle. (This is a notable development from WNL, in which she pays little attention to the impact that Leonore's decision to marry George will have on Austin.) Claudia and Alpin must decide if they

can remain together, or whether Alpin should fulfil the hopes of his childhood sweetheart, Graine. Claudia wrestles with the knowledge that even though she and Alpin, who is her 'fellow-traveller' (125), are emotionally perfect for each other, they are embedded within a social fabric which requires them to acknowledge the rights and feelings of the people in their community:

Suppose—for the sake of argument—they simply refused the sacrifice? Putting aside the right and wrong of the matter, would that really achieve their hearts' desire? Something in the depths of consciousness said emphatically, No. Ardent lovers, indeed, believed that they could shut themselves up alone in the sacred temple of their bliss, and not trouble about anyone or anything outside; but one had seen that sort of bliss grow pale in its shrine. And if, into the bargain, the shrine had been built out of another's sorrow!— (306)

If these two people want to build a life in which they remain integrated in their community, rather than doing so in complete isolation—which, as discussed in chapter 1, is not Caird's vision—they must acknowledge the pain they are capable of causing others should they resist making the required sacrifice. That the rejection of isolationism stems from 'the depths of consciousness' hints that this is an example of what Caird considers a true instinct, rather than an externally-decreed one; Claudia and Alpin are attempting to balance their internally-known truths within their social structure.

Yet the pair realise that giving in to the pressure for Alpin's self-sacrifice would be catastrophic for all three people involved. If Alpin marries Graine out of pity, duty, or obligation, he would not only give up a life with the woman he loves, but atrophy himself, forced to suffer 'starvation within sight of plenty' (309). To ensure that the reader does not dismiss Alpin's belief as mere pessimism, Caird provides an example of

a marriage which, made on exactly the same lines, has disintegrated disastrously. The husband endures daily torture with a wife to whom he is fundamentally unsuited: 'A man of fine honour, of sensitive, melancholy nature, living day in, day out, with a woman who stated, as a matter of course, that she read letters not addressed to her!'

(421) Although both partners suffer, the wife is incapable of understanding the nature of the sacrifice that has been made on her behalf. The unhappiness is borne overwhelmingly by the husband, who feels and understands the cost to his individuality and happiness: 'As for overmuch self-sacrifice, the culprit seldom paid the heaviest part of the bill; for his imagination was more or less deadened by the process. The cost had to be borne by others— "Whose nerves are all too keenly alive!" Alpin exclaimed, "whose hearts are greedy for joy!"' (351). Those who are less inclined to follow the beaten path of social duty—those who have creativity, foresight, and the ability to move outwith social boundaries of their expected roles—pay the highest price when being brought back down to that level.

In an attempt to determine whether Alpin could conceivably avoid this result by marrying Graine, he and Claudia question whether Graine would reach the same understanding they have. Unfortunately, at this stage of the novel, she is too limited in her knowledge of other people to be able to do so, as a subsequent conversation proves. Jack has broken off his engagement, and the society rumours indicate he jilted Molly in favour of a woman he loves better:

Claudia turned quickly to Graine. "Do you think it would be right for Jack to marry Molly, Graine?" There was a breathless hush for a second.

“So long as she didn’t find out it would be all right,” was Graine’s answer.

“And if she did find out?”

“Oh, then—it would be awkward. But after all,” she added, with a light-hearted chuckle, “he would probably settle down contentedly with what he had, like the batch of couples who got accidentally mixed at the altar when they came up to be married, and decided, after talking it over, to let matters rest as they were.”
(355-56)

Graine’s conclusion is based on the belief that marriage is not as much the joining of two fellow-travellers as it is a social status to which people can easily adapt. Personal happiness is less important than the façade which would allow couples to fulfil their social requirements. As with Bessie and Dick, only the evolution of the person for whom the sacrifice is intended can free all concerned from what would otherwise be their inevitable conclusion. Like Bessie, Graine proves to be capable of such development, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Julian in POTG is in an even less enviable position, for while Alpin has Claudia with whom to share his fears, Julian initially believes that Anna is his true companion. Only slowly over the course of the novel does he come to realise the cost of his sacrifice. The ‘love’ he shares with Anna requires the gradual relinquishment of his autonomy, requiring him to take responsibility for her actions and feelings. Instead of a relationship of equals, they have an inherently unbalanced partnership: ‘He, after all, then, was finally held responsible for the conduct for which Anna was so passionately remorseful! He felt perplexed. And on him, too, was laid the duty of guarding against a recurrence of her error, by avoiding what she called “evasive replies”! Julian had no desire to be evasive: but—well, it seemed strange that the conduct which Anna so ruthlessly

condemned in herself should have the inconsequent effect of adding to his duties and detracting from his liberties!’ (234). Anna describes their ‘love’ in terms of mutual devotion, but in fact it is egotism which binds Julian to her through guilt and fear. He is unable to express himself freely, being restricted to responses that will spare her pain.

Eventually, her approach to their relationship causes the death of Julian’s affection. A secondary character’s description of Anna as a ‘vampire’ reflects her insatiable need to drain her lover of everything that makes him unique, for the sake of maintaining and bolstering their ‘love’ (260). It also, as Ann Heilmann notes, places Anna in the position of being a New Woman who ‘is a destructive rather than reconstructive force in society’—a figure which Caird sees as having been produced through the struggle to escape gender construction (*New Woman Strategies* 173). Only the intervention of Julian’s friends—one of them a woman whose own marriage was based on mutual independence, upheld by Caird as the ideal relationship—prevents him from being dragged into an inescapable web of sacrifice. He has become incapable of seeing that his individuality was becoming constricted by Anna’s needs: ‘I was indolent. I longed for peace. Above all, I longed to see you happy; and so I paved the way for all this misery. I let you claim, and I yielded to your claim, until slowly but surely you had ousted everything in my life but the thought of yourself, and thus—paradox as it may seem—my love was wounded, harassed, wearied out. That is the cruel truth!’ (307). A sacrifice made willingly—even when it is not initially seen as a sacrifice—leads to damage for both parties, and prevents either of them from maintaining and developing their relationship as two individuals.

The egotism which Caird rejects in Anna and other characters is a damaging character trait. It is even more heinous than the charge of selfishness which is levelled by many characters against those who attempt to pursue personal goals. In SOS, for instance, Claudia is sent letters by her mother asking why, 'having left Paris, [she] did not come home. It was most unpleasant. Did Claudia think there was nothing to do in life but please oneself? [...] nowadays children thought only of themselves' (211). Although Claudia's mother, Lady Temple, charges her daughter with selfishness, Caird believes that it is Lady Temple's egotism which is the real problem—a belief of ownership and an enforced demand for affection that should be given freely. Egotism becomes a particularly serious issue in POTG, when Anna's love for Julian is not desire for mutually enjoyable companionship but rather a self-centred need. Caird uses a discussion of another relationship, one in which the people involved freed themselves from egotism, to demonstrate the differences between her ideal and Anna's reality:

"Though by nature at one, as regards their general attitude towards life, they made free to breathe and to think with absolute independence, and to live independently too."

"Oh, well, so much the better: for then the parting cannot have brought the same overwhelming despair to the survivor."

"Alas! I fear that it did. The independence of which I speak did not mean less love, but less egotism."

"Less egotism?" repeated Anna, in amazement. "How can it be egotism to live immersed in another?"

[...] "It is not love, but egotism, that requires the beloved one to tell his heart-beats and spell out his every thought, in our presence. It is not love, but one of the most tyrannous of the disguises of egotism which stipulates for 'unity,' or for this or that relationship, this or that attitude of the emotions." (226-27)

Whereas Caird's ideal marriage includes individual liberty—'we believe that the

greatest gift we can offer one another is...freedom', Claudia explains in SOS (397)—egotism requires the couple to share themselves to the point where their identities are practically fused. This requires one partner to live wholly for the other, an act which to Caird is synonymous with sacrifice, for it demands an abandonment of individuality in favour of living only for the needs of another. In OTW, Caird shows that Nelly's father attempts to sidestep this process, 'reject[ing] Mrs. Erskine's attempts to make him the Zeus of the family ', but closer studies such as Hadria's parents in DOD and Viola's in WOA demonstrate that the end result of such a relationship frequently becomes tyranny (I: 71-72).

Sacrifice of the individual for the sake of another, then, is in Caird's view an ultimately doomed undertaking. The only happiness can be found in ignorance, at the expense of understanding the true significance of the situation. This is clearly the case in SOS, where Graine is not in love with Alpin per se, but with his position as her childhood sweetheart—she loves the concept, not the person himself. Until she is capable of seeing Alpin as a unique individual whose needs she is incapable of filling, she cannot relinquish the need to keep him for herself. Such a situation is a mockery of the 'ideal marriage' that Caird sets up as her epitome of happiness. Moreover, accepting the 'necessity' of vicarious sacrifice reveals a deficient sense of respect for the originality of the individual, in spite of social views that the torture undergone by the sacrificed individual is acceptable.

Sacrifice for family

The sacrifice of an individual to their family expands the range of potential suffering. Just as Caird rejects the 'ownership' of a wife by her husband—a situation allowed both by law, as John Stuart Mill emphasised, and social convention—she denies that an individual should sacrifice themselves for the needs of family members, who are a miniature version of the 'greater good' she denies so vigorously in her fiction and anti-vivisection work. The 'duty' expected of children towards their parents, in this case, is only a mask for the relationship of owner and possession. In her work, such ownership becomes another manifestation of the egotism which demands sacrifice. Leonore's mother in WNL is an exception in allowing her child to grow 'according to her nature', for most parents in Caird's novels insist that their children do what is best for them (III: 88). The specific sacrifices required to be made by women through their roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother will be discussed extensively in chapter 4; this section will address Caird's opinions on the non-gendered sacrifice of children. Although not every child in her work suffers this fate, Caird views the concept of 'duty' as an excuse used to force children to subordinate their own individuality to the desires of their family members.

Caird argues that society considers it acceptable to view children as possessions, rather than as autonomous individuals. Children in her work are frequently denied an identity as individuals capable of growing in different directions than their parents—in fact, such independence is actively frowned upon. Mrs. Fullerton in DOD, for instance, is annoyed that her own 'buried impulses had broken out, like a half-smothered flame, in her children' (33) and later works to ensure that Hadria behaves in conformity with

correct behaviour: 'Mrs. Fullerton opposed her daughter's [musical] endeavours as firmly as ever. It was not good for a girl to be selfishly pre-occupied. She ought to think of others' (109). The older daughter, Algitha, laments the tendency of parents to disregard the possibility that children have capacities as individuals: 'Ah! if it were not that one is born with feelings and energies and ambitions of one's own, parents might treat one as a showman treats his marionettes, and we should all be charmed to lie prone on our backs, or to dance as may be convenient to our creators. But, as it is, the life of a marionette—however affectionate the wire-pullers—does become monotonous after a time' (38). Children who are controlled by their parents lack the ability to exercise free will, which restricts their ability to make decisions for their own benefit. Hadria, responding to Algitha, goes further in her criticism by claiming that children are parental possessions: 'I think most parents regard their children with such favourable eyes, not so much because they are they as because they are theirs' (38). The primary benefit of children is their existence as commodities to be used for personal benefit. This occurs most overtly in WOA, when Viola as a girl is not cherished for her unique self but instead resented for her present inability 'to retrieve the family fortunes' through a good marriage (I: 9).

Like many of Caird's characters, Grierson in TGW finds that the pressure to make himself a sacrifice on the parental altar becomes overwhelming when duty is combined with genuine love of that parent. His sisters have their strongest argument in the fact that Grierson's refusal to join the army, interpreted by them as pure selfishness on his part, hurts their father. As occurs with Julian in POTG, who learns that he should

not have to be responsible for Anna's feelings, Grierson understands that the demanded sacrifice should not be his burden: 'if he insists on worrying because he can't force his will upon me, it's his own doing not mine' (107). Yet he cannot free himself from the guilt of causing his father to suffer. The combined ties of duty and love are seen by Caird as the most powerful force used to ensure that children will sacrifice themselves for their parents. This is shown in a nascent form in her first novel; Leonore realises that even though duty in and of itself might possibly be thrown over, the ties of love make that impossible:

What in the wide world could control her, make her submit to endure sufferings and miss delight, except this old idea of Duty, that held the best half of mankind in thrall, at the mercy of the worst?

Surely the powers of hell had forged no other chain to bind us to their gridirons and their racks? Ah! yes, there was one other chain more powerful still than duty—how the demons must have laughed in forging it!—the chain of Love, which holds us helpless in the fiercest tortures, obliging us to put forth to the full our terrible human faculty of almost limitless endurance. The wild, delightful picture of liberty faded away. Though she flung over every other bond, there was still this ruthless tie of Love to hold her and control her to the end. (WNL III: 303-04)

Because love makes characters incapable of harming a parent—or tears them apart with guilt if they do so—those characters become incapable of pursuing the paths they would otherwise take. Hadria in DOD pulls away from her husband and children because she feels neither duty nor love for them, but when she learns that her mother is ill, she rushes home as if compelled. At the end of the novel, Hadria's development is effectively crippled through the doctor's pronouncement that were she even to hint of making another such attempt at freedom, she will kill her mother: 'If her children desire to keep her among them, it will be necessary to treat her with the utmost care, and to oppose her

in nothing. Further disappointment or chagrin, she has no longer the power to stand.

[...] Her life, if not her reason, are in her children's hands' (359).

Viola Sedley in WOA is similarly tied to the path of duty. She cannot bring herself to leave her marriage, even while suffering her husband's brutality, because to do so would injure the mother she loves more than anyone else in the world. At a dinner party, only minutes after realising how much she loves Harry Lancaster, she is caught short by the 'sight of her mother's suffering face': 'In an instant there was a rush of fear and shame at her own unholy thoughts. What unspeakable grief if that mother knew how the daughter had changed in these two short years! Was there nothing in this world for her but sorrow and disappointment? [...] Scarcely half-an-hour ago that daughter had been ready to fling over everything on earth for the sake of a passion which Marion Sedley's child ought not even to know the meaning of!' (III: 52-53) The use of third-person descriptions for Viola as her mother's daughter, particularly in the context of her internal monologue, accentuates Caird's theme that the 'chain of Love' demands possession of the child. As Hadria complains, 'what has love worthy of the name to do with this preposterous interference with the freedom of another person? If that is what love means—the craving to possess and restrain and demand and hamper and absorb, and generally make mince-meat of the beloved object, then preserve me from the master-passion' (DOD 130). Yet for children sacrificed to their parents, this is the type of 'love' which holds them in thrall and which, to Caird, causes the death of the individual.

Because parents give their children physical life, children are then conventionally

expected to devote their lives to their parents regardless of their personal inclination. In DOD, Caird uses Hadria to point out the lack of logic between the supposedly 'natural' urge to have children and the actual result, in which parents demand repayment: 'it is universally admitted that children are summoned into the world to gratify parental instincts. Yet the parents throw all the onus of existence, after all, upon the children, and make them pay for it, and apologise for it, and justify it by a thousand sacrifices and an ever-flowing gratitude' (39). Children become victims on the parental altar, required to live the life that someone else wishes for them, in the name of their duty. Yet the situation is even more complex than this, for Caird shows that even Hadria herself—in spite of her self-awareness—is not immune from the temptation to treat a child as an object to serve a personal goal. When Hadria takes on the role of surrogate mother to the late schoolmistress's illegitimate daughter, she gives no indication that she loves her ward. Her avowed intention is to defend the girl from the social codes that drove her mother to suicide, teaching her 'to strike a blow at the system which sent her mother to a dishonoured grave, while it leaves the man for whose sake she risked all this, in peace and the odour of sanctity' (190). Caird may be deliberately ironic in allowing the child to be Hadria's intended vengeance upon masculine hegemony, but she also underlines the ease with which children can become representations of the parents' own needs.

Struggling, and guilty in their struggle, the children are usually overpowered; even if they are not, the cost is high. Only after her mother's death is Viola able to find release from the love, duty, and guilt which has restrained her to an identity as Philip Dendraith's wife. Although at the start of her marriage she protests this loss of identity,

her life as Mrs. Dendraith shows that she has internalised her mother's request for what her life should be: 'You talk about making me understand my position. [...] but it seems to me that I understand it very well. I am—in your own words—branded with your name. It gives you a claim over me so long as I live. [...] You are my husband—you married me in the face of my repeated assurance that I did not wish to marry you—you have thus become my master, and, if you choose, my tyrant—I am at your mercy' (II: 176-77). The death of Viola's mother allows her to come to the decision to flee her husband (although, as will be shown in the next chapter, her success is ambiguous).

Children who break under the strain sometimes do so after having 'escaped', as is the case with Anna in POTG, but this can also occur without any outward indication. Mary, a minor character in SOS who embodies the 'Higher Life' of renunciation, commits suicide hours after preaching about the joy to be found in one's duty to family: 'The very night before her death, Mary had confessed that the monotony and fret of the life had unstrung her nerves a little.... She got frightened of nothing—a sense of dread.... Next morning—Harriet could hardly tell the tale—she had found her sister lying motionless on her bed with an empty bottle of laudanum by her side. Not the faintest hint had she given of her intention. She had been paying regulation calls with her mother day before, and the menus were all written and the flowers arranged....' (71).

Mary has become incapable of claiming her rights as an individual in any way other than suicide. In both of these cases, feeling possessed by family members leads to an intolerable situation that can be resolved only through violence, whether towards others or oneself.

Caird shows that the sacrifice of children to their families is pointless, for the child must give up all that is worthwhile in themselves in favour of fitting themselves into a Procrustean bed. Neither happiness on the part of the parent nor gratitude from the child results from this situation. Although Lady Temple in *SOS* gives up whatever she can in order to assist her son, forcing her daughters to do the same, those very sacrifices cause the son to abandon them: ‘her son, for whom the whole family had been sacrificed, seldom went near her; the simple mode of living to which he had reduced his mother and sisters being in his estimation unbearably uncomfortable’ (79). She has gained no good for herself, having alienated her son, nor have her other children received any benefit from their enforced sacrifice. Those children who fight for their individuality, meanwhile, lose much of their energy simply in conducting the fight, and risk becoming shadows of their potential selves. Claudia in *SOS* breaks away from her family on multiple occasions, but is repeatedly pressured to return home to fulfil her ‘duty’ — a situation which weakens her ability to lead an independent life. Like Hadria, in spite of her intellectual knowledge that her family is wrong to demand her presence when there is no logical reason for it, she still feels obligated:

“Why should you empty your veins to supply your relations with that which is flowing in torrents all round them? It’s damned nonsense!”

“It is, but what is to be done? Putting myself aside...”

“Which you have no right to do!” cried Alpin fiercely.

“But suppose it for the moment—I ask myself should I do them any real service by suppressing every impulse and life that is in me?”

“Good heavens, no! To become a neurotic, hysterical creature — or to spend half your strength in a struggle to escape that ghastly

fate? That isn't Duty...or if it is—remember the “holy Nay even towards duty.” (214)

Claudia, like Hadria, becomes reduced to the identity of ‘the child’, who must fulfil the duties which children are expected to perform. Her talents and desires are crushed by the weight of conforming to her role, which is demanded even when other people are better capable of performing those required duties, yet her family is incapable of seeing that she would be a ‘better’ daughter if she were left to decide for herself how best to love them, and show that love.

Hadria argues at length that the sacrifice of children results from the construction of motherhood (discussed in chapter 4), but Caird goes beyond this gendered interpretation in her view of the sacrifice required for the family—or, rather, the Family, for she demonstrates that Family is upheld as an ideal for which individuals must be sacrificed. Like the concept of Mrs. Grundy, the Family acts as a collective force on the individual, pressuring conformity and sacrifice for the sake of the greater good. Lady Temple in *SOS* is shown to have gone so far as to have replaced her Christian religion with this concept of Family; as one of her daughters claims, ‘Stephen was more selfish and madly extravagant than ever; and Mother wouldn't let Father refuse to pay his debts. Her God was the Family, and Stephen, as heir, had to be treated as a sort of sacred crocodile, the Family incarnate’ (60). By upholding her son the apotheosis of the Family, Lady Temple subordinates herself to him and forces the rest of her family to do the same—an act which costs one of the daughters her life, for no money remains to pay for tuberculosis treatment. The child, then, is forced without consultation to sacrifice herself for the concept of ‘family’ which decrees that a single sibling deserves the

obeisance of the rest. This also depersonalises the child himself, who is seen not as a person but as ‘the heir’. Caird depicts such depersonalisation most explicitly in *TGW*, where Grierson Elliot is considered by his relatives to be ‘the first-born Elliot male’, filling a position which requires him to uphold the Family traditions regardless of his personal inclinations: “‘My father has the family interest at heart, I know,” he said, “and every man has a right to his religion—(for the family is his religion)—but he has not the right to offer up other people on his little private altar. That’s where most religious people go wrong”” (105). Grierson himself is the one being placed on the ‘little private altar’, being unsuccessfully blackmailed into giving up his scientific research in favour of an army career, though he could have had the ‘unfailing piety’ of his sisters’ ‘worship at the shrine’ of his masculinity (8).

Caird does not expect children to reject entirely any sense of respect for, or obedience to, their parents. It is the demand for the sacrifice of individuality which causes the problem. A balance is needed to allow filial respect to be integrated with the child’s own pursuit of happiness. Algitha in *DOD*, fighting her mother to be allowed to pursue charitable work in London, acknowledges Hadria’s sardonic comment that ‘ever-flowing gratitude’ is required of children, but she does not reject that concept entirely: “‘I am quite ready to give gratitude and sacrifice too,” said Algitha, “but I don’t feel that I ought to sacrifice everything to an idea that seems to be wrong. Surely a human being has a right to his own life”” (39). In Caird’s view, however, most parents demand nothing less than their children’s lives.

Vicarious sacrifice of the child, then, requires them to remain subordinate to their

parents and other family members while their personal desires suffer. In some cases, this leads to actual death, as with Mary in SOS and the daughter of Lady Temple. In others it creates children who, Caird implies, will go on to repeat the cycle and damage future generations. The Professor, when chided by Hadria for not being able to understand her situation, responds: 'I can very easily. I see that the sacrifice of her own development, which your mother has made for your sakes, is taking its inevitable revenge upon her, and upon you all' (DOD 107). Guided not by their natural internal motivations, but by the will of another, the sacrificed child is to Caird in the same position as the victims of the druids or the animals who suffer through vivisection: autonomy and personality is overridden for the benefit of others.

Caird's solution to the demand for sacrifice

To Caird, the sacrifice of an individual for the benefit of others differs from an act of self-sacrifice which is undertaken in order to prevent another person committing an involuntary or unwanted sacrifice. The latter is in fact one of her primary means of social change. The key to the difference is motivation: egotism, centring the world in oneself, causes a person to demand that others should live for them, whereas freeing oneself of egotism allows one to reject the need to demand sacrifices. In 'Sacrifice: Noble and Ignoble', an article in which Caird contends that Nature does not call for barbarity when civilised action is possible, Caird sets out her differentiation between egotistical sacrifice and an egoless response: 'a power, a spirit which has wisdom and real knowledge at her command, but wisdom and knowledge that are won by just and

merciful means—by self-sacrifice, and not by the ruthless sacrifice of others' (4).

Bessie in AROTM and Graine in SOS, the two characters who most clearly personify Caird's altered version of sacrifice, both gain 'wisdom and knowledge' during the course of their stories, realising that they must relinquish their own need for that sacrifice. As a result, they allow other people the room to express their own individuality.

In SOS, Caird uses the benefits of self-sacrifice as a way of allowing all three main characters to avoid misery. Alpin reaches the painful conclusion that he cannot marry Claudia, in spite of their commitment to each other, because of the pain it would cause Graine. As quoted earlier, Graine's initial thoughts on marriage are that a mismatch will sort itself out over time; however, she comes to realise the pain she would cause everyone by allowing Alpin to make such a sacrifice on her behalf. This occurs not because anyone tells her, but through her own ability to synthesise several different pieces of information and to understand that they all point in the same unhappy direction: 'the truth streamed in, blinding her, smiting her to the heart [...], the full bearing of Leah's confession revealing itself unmistakable in connection with these other hints' (370). ('Leah's confession' is that a letter which Graine wrote to Alpin informing him of her love had been stolen by Leah, and replaced with a forged letter in which Graine spurned him.) Graine initially intends to explain the misunderstanding about the letter, but quickly moves from this idea to an entirely new concept: 'She saw how utterly at cross-purposes she and Alpin had been from the moment that he had received her letter. Why should he continue to care for one who seemed so fickle? And

what more natural, more inevitable than that he should have come to love some one else?' (370) If Graine should tell Alpin about the forgery, she will bind him to an emotion which he no longer feels. Caird here depicts Graine in the act of evolution, discovering that love between herself and Alpin is no longer his motivating force. That she is capable of moving beyond the demand for Alpin's sacrifice is shown when she rejects the possibility of insisting that he retain his old affection, but instead allows both of them to move forward to new relationships. This scene occurs at the 'great grey Sacrificial Stone' (371), but it is Graine, not Alpin, who accepts the sacrifice for herself, by keeping from Alpin information that would 'cause him needless suffering' (372).

Relinquishing her love for Alpin is a difficult task. However, Caird shows that doing so allows Graine to move beyond the boundaries of self and replace her egotism with a greater happiness:

The keen pain ebbed for a moment as the peace-giving thought swept out to sea all the dreams and hopes of the personal self. These inevitably drifted back again: piteous, broken things reviving the sharp sense of crushing disaster. But for the moment, this had been drowned in the great waters, prophesying comfort in the days to come. It was the greatest test of love that she had ever passed through, and she came out triumphant. (372)

By subduing her selfish desires, Graine glimpses the larger context of what her self-sacrifice means, learning that 'the dreams and hopes of the personal self' are far from the most important things in life. Later in the novel, when Alpin learns the truth about the letter, realising that Graine deliberately gave up happiness so that he could marry Claudia without guilt, he praises her as a 'forerunner of the nobler humanity' (434).

In AROTM, Caird centres an entire plot around the ability to give up the need to demand another person's sacrifice. Bessie's marriage to Dick will seemingly gain her

everything she wants in life, particularly the ‘quiet cares of home and children’ which have formed her only desires for the future (63). That Dick makes his promise in front of witnesses strengthens Caird’s implication that his relinquishment of his future hopes is an action which upholds a social demand for the sacrifice of the individual. However, Bessie’s beliefs have been altered over the course of the story by her discussions with Margaret Ellwood, and she comes to realise that Dick’s sacrifice will damage him. Rather than holding him to his decision, she finds the strength to reject the social codes which have forced Dick to his proposal. Moreover, she does not do this privately, but as a public statement:

“What do you wish me to do, Bessie? I curse myself for having brought this upon you! Tell me what to do, and how to save you pain. If I have not utterly lost your love, will you give it me still?”

Bessie drew a little quick, gasping breath, and she turned upon Dick a long, hungry, searching look. Then an expression of pain came into her eyes.

“Yes, I will give it to you,” she said; “and I will give you a proof of it into the bargain!”

Dick took her hand, and every one thought that the matter was satisfactorily settled. [...]

“Please wait a moment,” said Bessie tremulously, her hand still in Dick’s. “I want to say that—that I will not marry Dick Coverdale!” (135-36)

Not only has Bessie become able to recognise that forcing Dick into marriage will damage him, she is able to resist ‘the storm of anger and remonstrance’ which the onlookers heap upon her—a feat all the more noble given that she is sacrificing her own dreams of the future (137). It is her true feeling for Dick, rather than her general desires for domesticity, which allow her to remain steadfast: ‘Margaret’s words were still in her

ears: “If you love him you will not tie him to your side.” The thought that she was doing it for his sake armed her for this terrible self-sacrifice’ (137).

Although this initial transition period is painful for Bessie, her act of self-sacrifice allows both herself and Dick to develop as individuals. Bessie has clearly taken only the first step, and is not entirely sure what will happen next: ““But I am going now to work for myself, and to face the world,” she said naïvely, looking up to Margaret for approval’ (142). Her choices for life having changed so dramatically, she must look for assistance to a woman who has made her own decisions. However, Bessie’s development over the course of the story indicates that she will continue to grow emotionally after she leaves her village. Dick, for his part, fully understands the pain she has undergone to reach this point, and that her willingness to sacrifice her dreams instead of his demonstrates her worth and value: ““Bessie,” he said, going down on his knees on the grass, “you behaved like a heroine! It went to my heart. I know why you did it, when you braved what was for you the most horrible ordeal you could go through!”” (142) Both characters have gained the opportunity to reject the positions that society demanded of them. In looking down upon the village where she once desired nothing but marriage, Bessie becomes able to judge her own distance from its requirements: ‘Six days ago I was down there in the valley, in my tiny room, looking out of my little window on to the street, trying to imagine myself at Braisted; and now I am up here with you both—so high up! And it is so wild and so beautiful!’ (144) Closing the novella with these words allows Caird to emphasise Bessie’s revised perspective, while the diminutive scene below underscores the limited impact of social convention in

the wider world.

Demanding sacrifice, then, is to Caird an act which not only hurts the individual but prevents evolutionary development. The quotation used at the head of this chapter—a character's paean to 'the most blessed life [which] is the life of sorrow' earned through sacrifice—represents a commonly-held view which Caird, in her novels, is keen to challenge. A life of sorrow not only brings unwarranted misery, but cripples those who live it. Instead, sacrifice and its sorrow can be avoided by a greater attention to the needs of the individual, allowing freedom from an unhappy life and the potential for widespread change. The practicality of Caird's solution initially seems limited; there is no immediate sense, for instance, that the inhabitants of Bessie and Dick's village will embrace the decision not to enforce marriage on young people who wish to eschew it. However, Caird's concern for the individual implies that such changes must begin with single people, gaining momentum as those people reach out to others—Bessie, after all, could never have made her decision had Margaret not only reached that point herself but been willing to devote herself to helping the girl. In time, she implies, enough people will reject sacrifice to make a substantial differences even in the villages of the modern world.

Chapter 4: 'A twin-flat in St. John's Wood': the gender construction of woman

'People are not all made to one pattern' (OTW II: 172)

To Caird, gender construction is the most powerful structure society uses to repress the individual. The biological division of humanity into distinct sexes becomes codified into a division of genders, each of which is restricted based on a particular model of ideal behaviour. Although Caird decried gender construction for both sexes, the period in which she lived focused on the 'Woman Question', and her nineteenth-century work in particular reflects this attention. While male characters played essential roles throughout her fiction, her Victorian novels overwhelmingly address the way in which women were pressured to give up their individuality and correspond instead to the perfect 'type' of womanhood. To do so required them to adhere to 'natural' behaviour which instead, Caird argued, reflected only a coercion to conform. She argued instead that individuality should be respected and encouraged. Instead of being reduced to a single domestically-oriented identity—a 'type' which, she implied, would stultify the development of the race—women could instead discover the full range of their natures, developing as individuals and ensuring that their societies, too, could evolve.

The first section of this chapter discusses Caird's interpretation of the gender construction of women. Beginning with a study of Viola Sedley in WOA, a character whose gender training is given close attention by Caird, the section goes on to explore how women are trained to conform to the boundaries required by their social contexts. Daughters are trained to place the needs of their families higher than their own, a belief

which sets the foundation for their transition to wifehood, in which they are expected to be subordinate to their husbands. When the wife became a mother, she was expected to want nothing more than to submit herself completely to the needs of her child. Caird contends that the 'natural' position of women in all of these roles are in fact social constructions, which have gained the force of natural doctrine through appeals to biological and legal authorities. The greatest tragedy of this construction, for Caird, is that even women who recognise the artificial nature of these boundaries are frequently unable to prevent themselves from internalising their expected roles.

The second half of the chapter examines Caird's alternatives to this artificial training, ideas which build on Mill's belief that women need to discover for themselves what their nature truly is. This section draws on her biography as well as her novels in exploring the variety of ways which Caird suggests will allow women to develop as individuals. Some possibilities are used to a limited extent, including artistic expression, foreign travel, and options such as higher education and public employment, which became significant alternatives for many New Woman writers. Caird's pinnacle of free womanhood is found partly in female friendship, a situation which ends the requirement that a woman should live only for a husband, and in its highest form in a revised version of marriage. This marriage of equals allows two individuals to share their lives yet remain free to pursue their own interests. The 'twin-flat', a modified living space described in *SOS*, is Caird's potent metaphor for her ideal marriage—a couple consisting not of a dominant man and a woman subject to his control, but two free individuals. Throughout Caird's work, she suggests the need for an equal relationship

which joins the New Woman with the New Man, but this ‘modern’ solution provides a concrete way in which eliminating gender roles expands the possibilities of individual growth.

The gender construction of woman: daughters, wives, mothers

The character of Viola Sedley in WOA is Caird’s clearest example of her views on how women are trained to a gendered identity. Viola’s story, in particular, demonstrates the ways in which women subdue their own inclinations in favour of the social and religious beliefs taught to them by their families and society, and how this interferes with women’s organic development. Taken more broadly, Viola’s life as sketched by Caird shows how sacrifice is demanded as an integral element of a woman’s life, in each of the three roles—daughter, wife, and mother—she is expected to fulfil. Viola herself never becomes a mother, but Caird’s oeuvre provides other characters whose similar training demonstrates how gender construction fashions a woman’s biological and social ‘destiny’.

WOA opens with the young Viola questioning the philosophical nature of selfhood and simultaneously gaining consciousness of her own self: ‘she must be real; a separate being called Viola Sedley,—with thoughts of her own, entirely her own’ (I: 3). Her ideas provide her with a sense of uniqueness, and she instinctively finds value in that individuality. The fact that no one has ever spoken to her about these concepts supports Caird’s belief that allowing a woman to develop according to her own internal character produces a richness of personality. The physical elements of Nature become a

metaphor for the expansiveness of the human soul, as Viola comes to realise that her self can potentially expand as far as the universe itself: 'this world that goes on and on, field after field, till it comes to the sea, and then goes on and on again, wave after wave, till it comes once more to the land, and then—? then the realms of the air, and the great cloud-regions, and beyond these—Nothing, a great all-embracing Nothing that will not stop' (I: 2). She senses the external restrictions which have been placed upon her, depicted as a 'line of trees [which] led the eye to the top of the hill, and there ending, created an unsatisfied longing to see over the other side', but she understands that without this artificial obstruction, the barriers to her potential identity would be limitless (I: 2).⁷⁷

Even as Viola begins to clarify her thoughts, however, the teachings of her mother constrain her. Like the line of trees, restrictive religious ideas have the capacity to stunt Viola's development: 'Could God Himself order that there should not be that great thought-confounding Emptiness? The child shuddered at the impious doubt, but her perplexed little mind staggered under the weight of the questions that came tumbling over one another in their haste' (I: 2-3). Because the questions Viola asks about her relative position within the universe are clashing with 'her strict religious training', she is developing 'a sense of inconsistency demanding double-faced belief' (I: 4). This schism, which is felt by other women in Caird's novels, stems from the divergence between the individual's self-directed development and that identity placed upon her by

⁷⁷ Caird frequently uses physical nature as a reflection of the ways in which woman's nature is controlled and shaped; Hadria, trapped within her parental home, comes to hate the sight of 'the line of the round breezy hills where the row of fir-trees stood against the sky, because that was the edge of her world, and she wanted to see what was beyond' (DOD 48). Although she physically moves past the boundaries of the fir-trees when she moves to Paris, her mental world has been irrevocably restricted, and in the end she is unable to escape from the limitations that have been forced upon her.

family, society, and religion. When Viola later cries to her husband ‘Will you not leave me even a little remnant of individuality? Am I always to be your wife, never myself?’, she encapsulates the position begun in her girlhood (II: 89). Caird sees Viola as subject to overwhelming pressure to identify herself not as a person, but as a gender—more specifically, the limited role that is the only option for that gender.⁷⁸

The effect of social conformity on untouched nature is to warp its potential to develop in any direction, instead forming it into acceptable, easily defined shapes. Caird uses a telling parallel in DOD when Hadria compares domestic life to ‘a gigantic ordinance map palmed off on one instead of a real landscape’ (205). Such a landscape constricts not only the immediate surroundings, but body and soul: ‘And think of the wild flowers one may gather by the wayside in some forest track, or among the mountain passes; but in these prim alleys what natural thing can one know? Brain and heart grow tame and clipped to match the hedges, or take on grotesque shapes—’ (205). Caird frequently gives these ‘shapes’ an explicitly domestic form; in OTW, Oenone accuses Nelly of having been forced into this type of constricted mould: ‘Has it ever struck you, as you faithfully obeyed the laws of your class, pruning your very soul and conscience, like the trees in some old-fashioned gardens, into, say the fashion of a teapot—(let that stand for the pattern prescribed)’ (II: 192-93). Hadria, for her part, argues that the figure of a woman holding a baby is ‘the symbol of an abasement, an indignity, more complete, more disfiguring and terrible, than any form of humiliation that the

⁷⁸ Such introspection on Viola’s part makes belies the interpretation of critic Ann Ardis, who alleges that the character ‘grows up oblivious to most things but her pleasure in the companionship of a scruffy dog’ (69). This serves as yet another example of the way in which Caird’s novels were not closely studied in the early days of New Woman criticism.

world has ever seen' (341). When women are forced into domesticity, they, like the elements of nature itself, become a shadow of what they could grow into if left untampered with.

An essential element of Viola's socially constructed identity is the duty to sacrifice herself for others. Sacrifice demanded of both sexes was discussed in chapter 3, but Caird denotes sacrifice for women as being centred around their biological capacity to be mothers, and the related belief that this potential for maternity led to a natural desire to care for others, to the point of self-abnegation if necessary. Urging daughters to live for others was a significant element in advice books throughout the century.⁷⁹ Sarah Stickney Ellis, in her influential work The Daughters of England (1842), expects that daughters who acknowledge their Christian duties hold 'the great end I have already supposed them to have in view—that of living for others, rather than for themselves—of living for eternity, rather than for time' (7). A later work, Phillis Browne's What Girls Can Do: A Book for Mothers and Daughters (1885), indicates the development of a middle-class consciousness in its suggestion that girls who do not have to support themselves can assist others. Browne's promotion of self-abnegation, however, strikes the same chord as Ellis in its importance to these girls' future lives: 'If my life is to be noble, I must think of and work for others, and try to make them happy' (9). However, Caird demonstrates in her novels the potential resentment and damage

⁷⁹ Although the instruction offered by conduct books must be seen as prescribing a particular ideal to be upheld, rather than an unbiased depiction of life in the historical past, Victorian advice manuals describe an overwhelming belief that women's most important—even sacred—role was to concern themselves with others. Elizabeth Langland claims that such manuals 'cannot be taken as straightforward accounts of middle-class life: these nonliterary materials did not simply reflect a "real" historical subject but helped to produce it' (24); by promoting certain conventions, the manuals also imply the necessity of adhering to a socially-acceptable identity.

caused by insisting that daughters view themselves as disposable for the needs of others.

For instance, in Caird's views of society, daughters are charged with neglecting their duty if they wish to leave instead of remaining at home to take care of family members.

In POTG, Anna describes feeling torn between her own desires and the obligation to look after her parents:

Objected? They were heart-broken! You see I was the only remaining girl at home; the others had married. It was an awful ordeal. Ought I to stay at home "unselfishly," as people called it, helping my parents to live the stupid little life that I despised; or ought I to act on my own convictions, and see what life is and what I could do with it, before I died? That was the dreadful question, and I decided—as you see. But, ah! the thought of those two old people alone, in the evening of their life, saddened by my desertion, as it seems to them, lies like a weary burden on my heart. (POTG 48)

As discussed in chapter 3, Caird claims that breaking away from duty is made more difficult by the ties of genuine love. The situation described by Anna is specifically gendered, however, because of the expectation that daughters will remain at home, a task never demanded of sons.⁸⁰ In DOD, Caird depicts the vacuity which results from sacrificing an unmarried daughter to the needs of the family. After Algitha moves to London, Hadria attempts 'to be the family consolation' in her absence (44). Even

⁸⁰ This division makes Eliza Lynn Linton's 'autobiography' even more intriguing for its gender nuances. In *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* (1885), when Christopher's sisters learn of his plans to move to London, they object on the grounds that he is useful in the home for his ability to 'take care of [his] sisters in their mountain walks and amuse [his] brother when he was not well'—arguments that would invariably be used to keep a girl at home (I: 235). Linton/Kirkland, acknowledging that s/he might indeed be 'selfish' for pursuing the London plan (though later amending this description to 'self-respecting'), nevertheless concludes that to give up this opportunity for such reasons 'would be a disproportionate expenditure of my own life in view of the gain to theirs' (I: 235). Such justification seems hypocrisy when placed beside Linton's public rebukes of modern women who 'leave the home and the family to take care of themselves, or under the care of some incompetent hireling, while they enter on the manly professions and make themselves the rivals of their husbands and brothers' ('Womanliness' 114). It makes more sense, though, if one accepts the overwhelming evidence that Linton's internalisation of a male persona resulted in a hypersensitive approach to gender roles and distinctions.

though her mother makes clear that this is ‘the very least that Hadria could do’ in the wake of the ‘defection’ of ‘the heartless Algitha’. Hadria’s efforts to meet her obligation are ultimately fruitless: ‘She was here as the family consolation, and nobody seemed to be consoled! Her efforts had been sincere and even enthusiastic, but the boys only laughed at her, in this rôle, and nobody was apparently in the least gratified’ (45). The rhetoric that a daughter will make the home happy and secure is demonstrated as a sham. The exception to this rule of sacrifice to family is if women marry. Algitha, who goes to London to do charitable work, struggles to convince her mother to accept her decision, never fully succeeding. Had she married, her mother would have been happy, even if the marriage had taken Algitha far away physically. Instead, Mrs. Fullerton ‘seemed to resent my independence, my habit of judging for myself’ — a circumstance which would not occur if Algitha had established a home of her own (DOD 360). Daughters are permitted to leave home only within a narrow range of options, all of which involve domestic duties.

In Caird’s view, this ideology of preparing daughters for their future duties as wives and mothers means that they are effectively allowed no alternative. When the teenage Viola Sedley, reluctant to be courted by Philip Dendraith, attempts to remove herself from his attention, her father lashes out at what he believes is his daughter’s attempt to reject her ‘inevitable’ role:⁸¹

⁸¹ This quotation, taken out of context, implies that Viola has stated that she did not want to marry. However, the lines immediately preceding this quotation are also a speech of Mr. Sedley’s, which has no direct connection to his next statement; moreover, there is a quotation mark closing his dialogue. It seems likely that there was a response from Viola, but that it was accidentally omitted when the manuscript was set in type. The lack of a definitive statement on Viola’s part adds to the ambiguity of her position as individual as opposed to a representative of her gender.

“Not want to marry? Not want to marry?” Mr. Sedley yelled, with a burst of fury. “You—you—miserable little fool! [...] And pray, what do you think would be the use of you if you didn’t marry? What can you do but loaf dismally about the place and serve as a wet blanket to every one’s enjoyment? What’s the good of a woman but to marry and look after her husband and children? What can she do else?” (WOA I: 140)

Mr. Sedley equates woman’s existence with her position in life—because she is a woman, she can do only one thing. Should she not marry, she has no ‘use’ in the world except acting as a reminder to everyone else that she has failed in her fundamental purpose. Daughters, unlike sons, have no opportunities to prove their value or worth through their own talents or initiative.

When Mr. Sedley goes on to mock Viola for suggesting that she might seek an alternative to marriage in earning her own living, he sneers that she could no doubt ‘become a shining light’ in any profession she likes (I: 141). His mockery illustrates Caird’s argument that the cursory education provided to young women left them with extremely limited options for their future. Viola’s assertion that she could support herself without conforming to social expectations about women’s roles only proves how she has been restricted. Her subsequent episode of self-questioning, far from revealing her potential, only exposes the depths of her ignorance: ‘What was she? What did she know? What had she seen? What could she do? To all this there was only one answer: nothing. Books had been forbidden her; human society had been cut off from her; scarcely had she been beyond the gates of her home’ (I: 141). Viola’s desire to reject the romantic intentions of a man she loathes—and her parents’ insistence that she accept them—is arrested by the fact that they themselves have eliminated any possibility of a different choice. (The chapter title, ‘Alternatives’, becomes painfully ironic.)

Caird further demonstrates that the argument which claims women can be useful only as wives and mothers becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, supported by parental failure to give daughters any opportunities beyond the domestic sphere. Indeed, Viola has been so restricted she can barely imagine what else she could do. The only options she can envision are menial, to 'sweep away withered leaves, or hoe out weeds; I could dust or cook, or wash, or—or anything that requires only health and strength. I might even be like Miss Bowles and teach, but it would have to be very young children,—I know so little, so little!' (I: 147).⁸² Even when attempting to move away from her assigned role, Viola's enforced ignorance means that she cannot comprehend the possibilities. Although her imagination is naturally capable of understanding the limits of the universe, her training has compressed her to a narrow range.

Caird shows that training women to their 'natural' roles, while instigated by their families, is reinforced by society. When Viola attempts to break off her engagement because she is disgusted by her fiancé's brutal treatment of his horse—a foreshadowing of the sexual violence that will be her lot as his wife—her mother convinces her that she cannot break her promise. Mrs. Sedley begins with a defence of male behaviour, which (like female behaviour) uses biology as the foundation for explanations of essential

⁸² Viola's litany of what she might do support herself is not simply a matter of attempting to escape from the restrictions of her gender, but a tacit acknowledgement that she would have to declass herself. She, like Caird herself, is clearly middle-class. It has become a truism that the Victorian middle classes are difficult, if not impossible, to define (see Gunn and Bell 13). Little is known about Caird's childhood, but her adulthood was clearly a life with no financial worries; in addition to the family estate in Galloway, her residences included London (generally in and around St. John's Wood) and a seat in Hampshire, described by an interviewer as 'in the midst of all the fashionable proprieties of the aristocratic neighbourhood within a few miles of a cathedral city' ('Free Marriage' 1). Her titled father-in-law left the bulk of his estate—over thirty thousand pounds—to Caird's husband. Caird rarely discusses the possibilities or dangers of inter-class mobility (except for vague references to possible financial destitution

masculinity. (The 'natural' violence of men will be explored in chapter 5.) By claiming that 'men are all like that,' Mrs. Sedley reduces Philip and his cruelty to universal behaviour, implying that it is his place as a man to be violent, and the place of the horse (and, by extension, his future wife) to endure this. Because Philip's behaviour is 'natural', Viola must not challenge it by deviating from her 'natural' place: 'though I agree with you that Mr. Dendraith was wrong to lose his temper as he did, I cannot think that it would justify you in withdrawing from your engagement' (II: 30). Mrs. Sedley then contextualises the relationship of these two people within their wider social framework, drawing on the opinions of her husband and her future in-laws: 'The family would regard it [ending the engagement] as a mere pretext or a deliberate slight; and think of your poor father!' (II: 30). Viola is being subjected to moral blackmail here, with her instinct that she should not marry Philip being overridden by her mother's insistence that other people's feelings take precedence. By showing the expansive range of people who have the ability to influence this relationship, Caird indicates that marriage is not a private contract between two people (as she argues it should be), but a public transaction subject to inference by the larger social body. This is emphasised by Mrs. Sedley's crowning argument: 'The engagement is by this time made public, [...] the whole neighbourhood is discussing it; really it is not possible, dearest, to draw back now' (II: 30, 31). In this context, the family and the neighbourhood combine to act as a sustaining force in training girls to adhere to their duty to others, and to set aside their own wishes.

in WOA and DOD), but her own position within a Marxist definition of class places her squarely in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Her characters almost always occupy this same social position.

Viola's situation throughout the novel wavers between devotion to duty—her mother, her husband, and society—and outbursts of her true emotions. After her marriage, for instance, she bursts out to Harry Lancaster that even if committing a murder, 'I should not think it necessary to apologise to' the Grundy-esque society matron who acts as the neighbourhood's supreme arbiter of social behaviour (II: 148). On the next page, however, she confesses to her husband that she has disobeyed his command to speak with Harry. The narratorial description occasionally fails to acknowledge this ambiguity and errs on the side of hyperbole, such as an early comment that Viola, 'beloved as she was, must always be prepared to make sacrifices for her brothers' and that she 'of course accepted this without question: her whole training dictated subordination of self' (I: 10).⁸³ While she nearly always submits to her training, as an adult she does frequently question the need for such acceptance. Caird thus implies that while the training of young women may lead them to submission, it also prompts their confusion and anger.

When Sir Philip Dendraith jovially asks the young Viola for a kiss, she responds 'I don't want to kiss you!' (I: 44) This firm statement of her personal wish, however, prompts a rebuke from her mother. The schism between Viola's instinctive reaction and

⁸³ A later heroine, Anna in POTG, claims that such a demand crippled her own abilities: 'She complained—she who was so clever—that she had been brought up in the densest ignorance: that the boys had been given all the advantages, while the education of the girls had been entrusted to the first idiot that turned up [...]. Anna declared that she had never ceased to feel the disadvantage of it, and that it would be a handicap all her life' (18). This kind of 'disadvantage' had the potential to become a major force for change; Barbara Caine argues that Emily Davies, founder of Girton College, Cambridge, became involved in the fight for women's higher education from a 'sense of personal injustice centred on the fact that she and her sister were given almost no formal education, while all her brothers were sent to major public schools and then to Cambridge'. Caine cites this personal experience as having so strong an effect that Davies worked in the field of education even though she herself had a 'lack of scholarly interests—or of sympathy with young women students' (9).

the act she is instructed to perform triggers an internalised conflict: ‘a look of intense trouble came into the child’s face. If her mother’s sacred wishes and her own feelings should now come into open conflict, there would blaze up a small Hell in that childish breast’ (I: 44). Although it is not clear whether Viola comprehends the reason for her ‘small Hell’ or if this is solely a narratorial comment, the conflict between duty and self-awareness indicates the depth of what Caird had earlier described as ‘double-faced belief’. In spite of Mrs. Sedley’s direct order to ‘give this gentleman a kiss when he asks you to do so’ (I: 45), Viola escapes the kiss, though only by flinging herself onto the bottom of the carriage and hiding her face, thus effectively removing herself from the social world.⁸⁴ The lesson that her position is to obey and to allow men to treat her as they desire is brought home when Philip (Sir Philip’s son) ignores Viola’s attempts to escape his attention and forces a kiss upon her. Viola knows that she has been treated like an object rather than an autonomous person: ‘she could only feel over and over again, with all a child’s intensity, that she had been treated with insolence, as a being whose will was of no moment, whose very person was not her own; who might be kissed or struck or played with exactly as people pleased, as if she were a thing without life or personality. Her sense of individual dignity—singularly strong in this child—was outraged’ (I: 50). There is no way in which Viola can retain her individual self within the social setting that demands her adherence to an artificial code of female behaviour.

⁸⁴ Later in the novel, Caird emphasises that Viola’s choice to leave her husband will exclude her from her social setting: ‘In how short a time was Adrienne to look back at that parting with a shudder of disgust; in how short a time was the memory that once she had called Viola Dendraith friend to be thrust aside, whenever it intruded, with horror and dismay!’ (III: 170). Here, the young Viola indicates a subconscious awareness that her ‘training’ has given her such narrow options that in order to do anything other than the life her parents assign to her, she must withdraw from her social setting (as previously noted with regard to her options if she fails to marry).

Although Viola accepts that she must sacrifice herself for her brothers, Caird shows that for a woman of her integrity and philosophical potential, training can never fully suppress individual impulses. Throughout the novel there is a tension between Viola's self and her constructed identity, and her implied suicide indicates that the world as it stands cannot accommodate a woman torn between the two.

One of the primary dangers of training daughters to sacrifice, according to Caird, is that they become used to the idea that their identities exist only in terms of their relation to men. They are therefore judged to act solely in order to attract husbands. Charles Darwin, in The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex (1879), used sexual selection to explain the physical and mental differences between men and women. He placed the role of women as striving to gain the best possible mate: 'The sexual struggle is of two kinds; in the one it is between the individuals of the same sex, generally the males, in order to drive away or kill their rivals, the females remaining passive; whilst in the other, the struggle is likewise between the individuals of the same sex, in order to excite or charm those of the opposite sex, generally the females, which no longer remain passive, but select the more agreeable partners' (684). Caird, however, contends that the struggle to gain a mate is not rooted in biology, but socially prompted, and that it is only because the training has become so endemic that it seems 'natural'. The result is that even actions which are not designed to attract men become interpreted as such. In WOA, for instance, Viola's attempts to escape from Sir Philip's kiss—movements so violent that she physically injures herself—are judged as a coquettish trick. Sir Philip asks whether 'you won't treat your lovers in this fashion in the time to

come', thus interpreting Viola's rejection of him as a deliberate use of feminine wiles (I: 48). She is therefore being fitted in to a 'type' of behaviour from which no deviation is possible. As she grows older, Viola's relationships with men continue to be treated as if she is deliberately encouraging male desire. When, during Philip's courtship, she leaves the house to avoid him, her father accuses her of flirtation:

She had never seen him so enraged, although outbursts of this sort, after his drinking-bouts, were not uncommon. [...] In the name of Heaven and common-sense, how did she expect to get a husband if she behaved in his crazy, addle-headed manner? Half the women in London were ready to throw themselves into Philip Dendraith's arms, and yet Viola would not condescend to the common politeness of coming to see him when he called! She had run away on purpose, of course; it was an old trick of hers, very girl-like and engaging no doubt, but might one make a polite request that these graceful exhibitions of coyness might not occur again? (I: 139-40)

It is taken for granted that Viola wishes to marry and that Philip's desirability on objective grounds—good looks, wealth, and the prospect of a title—will be acceptable to any woman, regardless of her personal inclination. Viola is therefore pressured to adhere to these conventional ideals, both because they are her 'natural' role as a woman and because her position as a daughter requires her to support her family through a good marriage. The fact that it is the profligacy of her father and brothers which has caused the family debt does not reduce Viola's responsibility to save them by marrying a wealthy man. In this way, therefore, Caird demonstrates how dutiful daughters make the transition to become obedient wives.

When this occurs, their roles are equally concerned with adherence to social expectations and subordination. Philip Dendraith, in teasing the young Viola, says that if she marries him she will be able to 'become mistress of the castle, and to have that big

house and garden for your own, and some beautiful diamonds that I would give you' (I: 100). Caird shows, however, that the reality of this apparent utopia easily becomes a state of mental and physical imprisonment.⁸⁵ Oenone in OTW provides a hint of this when she describes the horrific marriage she endured prior to leading an independent life as an artist: 'I lived five terrible years under his roof—heaven only knows how! The horror and the—the degradation of it cling to me like a blight to this day. Past and future is poisoned with it' (I: 58). What Caird specifically means by 'degradation' is the male sexual drive to which wives were expected to submit.⁸⁶ Mill explicitly noted this point in The Subjection of Women, differentiating between wives and slaves with the observation that the latter has the right (and indeed 'a moral obligation') to refuse sex with her master, but that the wife has no such protection: 'however brutal a tyrant she may unfortunately be chained to—though she may know that he hates her, though it may be his daily pleasure to torture her, and though she may feel it impossible not to loathe him—he can claim from her and enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclinations' (504).

⁸⁵ George Eliot, as noted by Elaine Showalter, 'was a powerful precursor' for women writers of the generation that followed hers (Introduction viii), and WOA provides many points of comparison with Eliot's final novel, Daniel Deronda. Many are common tropes within fiction of this period, including the diamonds which symbolise the husband's purchase of his wife, the foreshadowed dagger, and a whip used as a representation of power. Caird's novel, however, echoes Eliot's through her attention to the psychological details of a marriage in which the woman is systematically beaten down by her husband. The primary difference is that whereas Gwendolen's 'murder' of her husband is recounted by an unreliable narrator (Gwendolen herself) rather than witnessed by the reader, and is subsequently denied to be murder by the eponymous hero, Caird gives her heroine full agency in committing her act of violence. As argued in the next chapter, Caird could easily have allowed Harry Lancaster to enter the room a few minutes earlier than he does, thus saving Viola from her abusive husband and from the need to kill him herself; that Caird does not signifies her intention of placing the weapon firmly in her heroine's hand.

⁸⁶ For a comprehensive examination of the legal grounds for enforced conjugal rights, see Shanley, chapter 6. Caird is known to have worked with Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, who during this period was speaking out against the legal and political refusal to acknowledge the crime of rape within marriage; however, there is no known essay of Caird's which targets this issue.

Caird's most potent symbol of the abuse of male sexuality, and the way in which women are trained to accept this, is shown through Philip's brutality towards Viola's beloved cat. Earlier in the novel, as discussed, her mother explained that it was natural for Philip to beat his horse. The couple has scarcely returned from their honeymoon when Philip, 'not without satisfaction', kicks the cat and hears 'a dull thud as the creature struck against the panelling' (WOA II: 103). Given that the honeymoon itself is not described, and that this event takes place within the domestic sphere, such ferocity reflects the couple's sexual relationship and the force which Philip is willing to use to enforce his sexual dominance. This time, Viola makes no protest—instead, she refuses even to acknowledge that the cat may have been deliberately injured. Caird's narratorial comment emphasises that her lack of knowledge is an attempt to shield herself from the truth: 'She could not, or would not, state whether the cat came out of the room or remained behind with Philip' (II: 105). Caird may be accused of coyness here, but her metaphor implies that the horror of enforced sex could only be endured through deliberately pushing away any conscious knowledge of the act.⁸⁷ Viola's training has brought her to the point where she not only submits, but attempts to close herself off to

⁸⁷ Discussion about sexual relationships within marriage was a significant element of New Woman fiction. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) addressed the problems caused by venereal disease, focusing on one woman unable to consummate her marriage because of her husband's disease and another who died when it was transferred to her. Although the latter is exactly the type of woman Caird is striving to change—one kept sheltered, innocent, and locked into her 'role' as a woman—the former, Evadne, is a widely read 'modern woman', but even her book learning was not sufficient to save her from a celibate marriage. George Egerton, in 'Virgin Soil' (1894), depicts a woman who berates her mother for having withheld the truth about men and marriage, not only about the need to be his subordinate in all things but also in the physical nature of marriage: 'You gave me to a man, nay more, you told me to obey him, to believe that whatever he said would be right, would be my duty knowing that the meaning of marriage was a sealed book to me, that I had no real idea of what union with a man meant. You delivered me body and soul into his hands without preparing me in any way for the ordeal I was to go through' (*Discords* 157). For Egerton, the sexual awakening of her character—done without her full, aware consent in the

the possibility of being anything other than a submissive, dutiful wife.

As discussed in chapter 1, Caird placed greater emphasis on social context than on the legal framework, particularly for the position of wives. However, she makes a deliberate reference to the law at the end of WOA, when Philip thwarts Viola in her escape attempt. This broadens their conflict from a personal struggle into a battle for the wife's ability to escape her husband's authorised dominance:

“Is your cruelty not satiated yet?” asked Viola at length. “Will you not end this interview and let me go out of your sight? If I am to be a prisoner, show me my dungeon and leave me in peace. Only let me go. I can bear no more.”

Philip took a catlike step nearer to her.

“Dungeon is an ugly word, my dear; besides, I am far too anxious and devoted to let you out of my sight. No, no; husband and wife are one; there must be no separation. Now you will come with me, my love, not to your dungeon; far from it.”

He was looking into her face with a keen, vengeful enjoyment of her torture. (III: 195-96)

In 1765, jurist William Blackstone stated that through marriage, a woman's identity became submerged into that of her husband: ‘By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband’ (qtd. in Wolfram 158). Although Blackstone's legal interpretation occurred well before the start of the Victorian period, it was still being quoted over a hundred years later; a Parliamentary Report condenses his belief to a statement that ‘Husband and wife are one person, and that person is the husband’ (qtd. in Wolfram 158). By quoting Blackstone, Caird is not so much referring directly to his statement as she is highlighting the fact that

matter—has been a brutal thing which ‘killed the sweetness in me, the pure thoughts of womanhood’

his opinion has become incorporated into the legal and social contexts of Victorian marriage.⁸⁸ She also indicates that Philip is subverting the ideal of marital unity by announcing his intention to rape Viola before he imprisons her.

Caird shows throughout the second and third volumes the way in which Philip uses this concept of incorporating his wife's identity into his own as a method of dictating Viola's actions. When he forbids her to see Sibella Lincoln, he expands his orders to encompass all of her social interactions: 'Not a breath, not a whisper shall go forth against the woman to whom I have given my name. Take care that you do nothing to give rise to it. You will see nobody, man or woman, without my knowledge; you will make no acquaintance, man or woman, without my knowledge. You will receive no letter that is unseen by me' (WOA III: 16-17). Through becoming Mrs. Dendraith, Viola is expected to leave aside any individual identity, and thus retains no ability to separate herself from the demands of her husband. Philip's use of Blackstone's words to her in their final scene, combined with his 'vengeful enjoyment of her torture', is Caird's demonstration of the true repercussions of Blackstone's idea. Philip's interpretation of the law is legitimate and supported by the social framework, and thus, Caird argues, it allows sanctioned abuse of wives—not only in terms of sex, but the complete subjection of the woman's individuality to the demands of her husband.

Although Caird does not follow the lead of contemporaries such as George Egerton⁸⁹ and Victoria Cross,⁹⁰ who celebrated sexuality as a means of liberating New

(159).

⁸⁸ For the wide range of legal aspects this position covered, see Shanley 8-9.

⁸⁹ Pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne (1859-1945). For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 17: 329-30.

Women,⁹⁰ she disapproves of the way sex becomes integrated into women's training. In DOD, Hadria speaks out against the way in which young women are initially taught modesty and innocence, and upon marriage forced to think otherwise:

They awake to find they have been living in a Fool's Paradise—a little upholstered corner with stained glass windows and rose-coloured light. They find that suddenly they are expected to place in the centre of their life everything that up to that moment they have scarcely been allowed even to know about; they find that they must obediently veer round, with the amiable adaptability of a well-oiled weather-cock. Every instinct, every prejudice must be thrown over. All the effects of their training must be instantly overcome. [...] Think what it means for a girl to have been taught to connect the idea of something low and evil with that which nevertheless is to lie at the foundation of all her after life. That is what it amounts to, and people complain that women are not logical. (DOD 250, 251)

Sex, in Hadria's view, is a paradox: because social orthodoxy demands that the sexual instinct must be suppressed in unmarried women, it is given 'a furtive, sneaky, detestable spirit' rather than the approach to 'treat it frankly and reverently and teach their girls to understand and respect it' (253). To Caird, the dual construction of the single/married woman—the former 'innocent' and unaware of sex and the physical aspects of motherhood, the latter centred upon these issues—makes little sense in the face of claims that woman's nature stems from female biology and that their instinctive needs dictate their 'natural' role.

⁹⁰ Pseudonym of Annie Sophie Cory (1868-1952). For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 13: 515-16.

⁹¹ George Egerton, for instance, uses a woman undressing herself as an image of physical emancipation: 'Her fingers glide swiftly down the buttons of her gown; in a second she has freed herself from its unsheathing, garment after garment falls from her until she stands almost free' ('An Empty Frame', Keynotes 116). The heroine of Victoria Cross' 'Theodora: A Fragment' proves herself to be indifferent to the merits of a 'good' match, a mental freedom matched by her physical form and her emotional openness to the narrator: 'this girl, about whom there was nothing of the humble, crooked-neck violet—in whom there was a dash of virility, a hint at dissipation, a suggestion of a certain decorous looseness of morals

Motherhood as a woman's biological imperative and her designated role in life was the key to the Victorian construction of womanhood. While social critics throughout the period acknowledged that, given wide disparities in the numbers of single men and women, many women would be unable to marry,⁹² a woman's desire to have children and her natural fitness for maternity were assumed. More relevantly for Caird's challenges, maternity was seen as requiring a woman's complete mental and physical devotion.⁹³ Breast-feeding mothers were particularly cautioned that their bodies were not their own; Dr. Lionel Weatherly, in The Young Wife's Own Book: A Manual of Personal and Family Hygiene (1882), advised nursing mothers to monitor their own diets, reminding them 'how quickly anything that disagrees with her has the same effect upon her little one' (80). While Weatherly, speaking from a medical perspective, could be argued as being particularly aware of the actual physical connection between mother

and fastness of manners—could stimulate me with a keen sense of pleasure, as our eyes or hands met' (in Showalter, Daughters of Decadence 12).

⁹² Shirley Foster, in a discussion of Frances Power Cobbe's article 'What Shall We Do With our Old Maids?' (1862), contends that 'Even the most thorough-going feminists felt that wifedom and motherhood were the most important aspects of female experience; what was wrong was the pretence that these roles were available to all' (11).

⁹³ Mothers were instructed to devote themselves to their children even before their birth. A pamphlet of the 1850s, The Health of Mothers, not only insisted that it was 'the bounden duty of every mother, if she is tolerably healthy in body and mind, to suckle her child' (20)—reflecting a concern that had been expressed since the eighteenth century—but emphasised the integration of the unborn child into the mother's physical existence: 'As soon as the first signs of pregnancy appear, a woman should at once begin to take great care of her health, if she has never done so before, not only for her own sake, but for that of her unborn child. She and it are one; her blood flows in its veins; everything which weakens and does her harm, weakens and does it harm also' (7). While this advice is medically logical, it requires a pregnant woman to cast her entire existence into the shadow of the child. Any lapse on her part may mean disaster, for if her 'mind is much disturbed by fear, anger, anxiety, sorrow, or any other painful feeling, her child's brain and other parts of the body are always more or less injured' (12). She must control herself not for her own sake but in order to protect her child's well-being. To reject this obligation deprives the child of its future good health, and is a dereliction of maternal duty.

and foetus, this ideal was also reflected in more traditional advice manuals⁹⁴ which adopted the position of an older woman offering personal advice to an anxious new mother. Mrs. Warren's How I Managed My Children From Infancy to Marriage (1865) places great emphasis on the influence of the mother over her children and cautions that this 'begins even during her months of pregnancy; therefore it behoves her to keep herself from vexatious cares and perplexities, even as she would shun pestilence' (7). This emphasis serves as a reminder that, according to conventional wisdom, the mother's entire existence is relational to that of her unborn child.

The sacrifice of the maternal body continued even after the physical connections of pregnancy and nutrition were severed, and the mother was instructed that she must take full and complete care of her children. An essay in the 1887 volume of The Mothers' Companion⁹⁵ compares the physical disfiguration of girls who are forced to wear tight corsets with 'the hardly less cruel and equally unnecessary pain and discomfort caused to very young children by their mothers' being unaware of the obligation to practise self-denial for their children's sake, or unwilling to make the sacrifice in other things than in dress' (Tyler 14). The list of items in which mothers

⁹⁴ Over the course of the century, motherhood became 'defined as a skill that had to be learned, rather than as behaviour that could be acquired', and gradually became handed over to experts in morality and health, particularly clergymen and doctors (Gorham 65).

⁹⁵ The introduction to the first issue of this magazine (first published in 1887) indicates one of the primary concerns about motherhood in the second half of the nineteenth century: the tension between the innate instinct to be a mother and increasing awareness of health and hygiene issues, which required women to be taught how to be mothers; the magazine itself claimed that 'no natural talent can compensate either for want of knowledge or want of training' (10). However, although Caird argues that any person trained in the concepts of hygiene could be a suitable mother substitute, the supremacy of the concept that women were naturally designed to be mothers was incorporated into developing arguments about this training. Part three of 'Notes on Health' advises that 'we hope the time is coming when the spread of education, and consequently of thought, will show women that motherhood is a profession—the best and highest a woman can enter, and that, just as for any other, and more than for any other, profession, she requires training ere she dare to enter upon it' (43).

must temper their own inclinations include eating (even after the child is no longer being directly nourished by the mother), exercise, late nights, and ‘angry passions’ (14). It is not simply a matter of the mother attending her children, but of orienting her entire life towards what will serve them best, and offering her full attention to their care.

Weatherly sums up this view when he states that ‘in the large majority of cases, the child’s future life with regard to health, and consequent possibility of happiness, depends almost entirely upon the mother’s watchfulness and care during the period of childhood’ (112).⁹⁶ Should neglect occur, the babies die; in querying a forty percent death rate, a pamphlet from the 1850s does not soften the blow when it blames the mother’s neglect for that result: ‘we fill the churchyards, and send babies a short cut from the cradle to the grave—we kill them by our bad management’ (How to Manage a Baby 5). The authority of these manuals, in all their variety, pointed towards the same belief: that the mother had to dedicate her life entirely to the care of her child.

Caird rejects the need for such maternal sacrifice and attention.⁹⁷ At the end of

⁹⁶ Such care also included religious training, most clearly demonstrated in Caird’s work as the kind provided by Mrs. Sedley to Viola in WOA. Many advice manuals (even those later in the century, which tended to be more medically-oriented) advised that mothers were responsible for whether their children became ‘either a follower of Christ or a companion of fiends’ (Warren 7).

⁹⁷ Although Caird does not discuss the physical concerns of pregnancy and breast-feeding, this does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest, given the restrictions of authors to discuss such material; Jill Matus begins Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity with an analysis of debates about propriety surrounding George Eliot’s depiction of Hetty’s pregnancy in Adam Bede (1-4). More relevantly, perhaps, given Caird’s later period of writing, her first three novels were published in the three-volume format and were thus subject to the tacit censorship of Charles Edward Mudie, whose circulating library (founded in 1842) purchased so many copies of new novels that Mudie ‘gradually exerted a material, intellectual and moral dictatorship on authors, publishers and readers’ (Coustillas 12). Avowing in 1860 that his subscribers wanted his library to act as ‘a barrier [...] between themselves and the lower floods of literature’ (‘Mr. Mudie’s Library’), Mudie became famous for offering novels that were suitable reading for the entire family. If the library decided that a novel was immoral, they would not purchase it; even if the work were bought in limited quantities, it would not be promoted, a technique known as ‘stocking it, but not listing it’ (Hiley 128). Neither would a novel rejected by the libraries be reprinted in a cheap edition (Cross 207). Like other writers of her time—including Wilkie Collins, who ‘felt constricted by a narrowly moralistic element’ when Mudie insisted on a change in the title of The New Magdalen

WNL, Leonore feels that she must give up her painting because her domestic duties take so much time that she cannot give her art the attention that it requires. Austin Bradley advises Leonore not to give up her art but instead to hire a woman to take care of her house and children: ‘neglect your social duties, let your housekeeper make a fortune out of you, leave the management of your children’s dress, education, and daily life in the hands of some refined, well-educated lady, who knows and will carry out your views’ (III: 320). Even in her first novel, Caird is rejecting the requirement for the mother ‘to look personally, minutely, and constantly to her children’, of the type that was claimed by an 1884 advice manual written ‘by a mother’ (*A Few Suggestions* 2-3). By including ‘refined’ among Austin’s definition, Caird accepts that the character of the caretaker is important, but the speech implies that if the housekeeper and the child-minder are properly educated in basic concepts of health and hygiene, they can fulfil any necessary requirements for the children’s well-being.

The mere fact of being a biological parent does not, in Caird’s view, include the ability to care for a child, as she explains in her essay ‘The Morality of Marriage’ (1890:

There is not sufficient ground in experience for believing that the mother and father are certain, or even likely, to be the best trainers for their children. Parenthood does not miraculously bestow the genius for education, nor the wide knowledge necessary for the task. Surely, it cannot be denied that the average mother is totally unfitted for the training of mind of character. [...] Surely they [the children] have a claim to enjoy the best training that the conditions of their century can offer. And such training can only be provided by those who have a natural gift for the work. (MOM/MOM 154)⁹⁸

(J.B. Taylor 210)—Caird therefore had to be circumspect in her dealings with sexuality, or face the suppression of her work.

⁹⁸ Caird’s insistence here on the need to ‘train’ a child indicates a shift in her thinking between her earliest writings and those at the end of the century. In WNL and WOA in particular, she rejects the parental

In her contention that the mother is not necessarily the best person to raise her child, Caird revisits mid-century debates about the governess, a figure who took over a mother's duties, particularly in providing moral guidance and gentility. However, in spite of her middle-class status, the governess was a paid servant. According to some critics, such as an anonymous writer in Fraser's Magazine, 'women whose lesson of life has been learned at mothers' knees, over infant's cradles, will be more earnest and genuine than those taught by a stranger, however well qualified' (qtd. in Poovey 143). By these standards, only a woman taught through pure, wholly attentive love can herself become a suitable mother. Caird, however, rejects the implied connection between the mother and child which makes any outside party unsuitable for a caretaker role.

Caird indicates that the maternal instinct is not the apotheosis of woman's 'natural' position as caretaker of her children,⁹⁹ but rather a social construction. She demonstrates this by using Hadria to point out that the existence of this alleged 'instinct' is in fact entirely relational to marital status. As mentioned earlier, Hadria decries that women's instinct for sex is expected to alter at a moment's notice; here, she challenges the illogical position that unmarried women are instructed that any desire for children is

attempt to form the child's character in favour of a child discovering its own nature. This quotation is taken from the revised version of 'The Morality of Marriage' (1898), but the sentiment is absent in the 1890 original.

⁹⁹ Although Caird rejects the maternal instinct, it should be noted that she does acknowledge the existence of instincts in relation to motherhood. However, in her work she places them in a hierarchy in which the human ability to reason and develop are superior to such instincts; basic human traits must be supplanted by higher forms of thought: 'No woman who possesses power of any sort beyond that of mere instinct, and in whom that power has not been entirely stifled and destroyed by long denial, can really satisfy herself by living for her children. A full-grown intelligent human being requires interests and activity on her own account. It is not because a woman is noble, but because she is stunted, that she is content to swamp her own spiritual life in that of childish and immature minds' (WNL III: 240). While many of her contemporaries saw motherhood as the pinnacle of a woman's life, as shown through Clementina Black's response to Caird's ideas, Caird argues that motherhood can be a lower rung on the ladder of the development of civilisation.

wrong, but that upon their marriage, they are immediately expected to make children the focus of their lives:

“Imagine,” she cried, with diabolical deliberation, “if Marion [the bride], on any day previous to this, had gone to her mother and expressed an overpowering maternal instinct—a deep desire to have a child!”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Lady Engleton.

“Why so shocked, since it is so holy?”

“But that is different.”

[...] “So we are all to be horribly shocked at the presence of an instinct to-day, and then equally shocked and indignant at its absence to-morrow; our sentiment being determined by the performance or otherwise of the ceremony we have just witnessed. It really shows a touching confidence in the swift adaptability of the woman’s sentimental organization!” (DOD 254, 255)

That the marriage ceremony has the power to alter the alleged centre of a woman’s existence, galvanising her ‘natural’ instincts through a social mechanism, is to Caird a glaring example of the illogical nature of this alleged ‘maternal instinct’. This demonstrates that the desire to have children is not rooted in woman’s biology, but rather an external manifestation of what society believed that her biology should prove, dependent entirely on social status.¹⁰⁰

The invocation of the maternal instinct as a woman’s ruling motivation is, to Caird, a further discrepancy in the responsibility to take care of their children. In the introduction to The Morality of Marriage, Caird argues that there is no reason, given that fatherhood is as natural a condition as motherhood, ‘why a father should not be expected

¹⁰⁰ Caird sees the wedding ceremony as a symbol of the husband’s ownership of the wife. In WOA, Viola surprises Philip Dendraith at the altar by informing him ‘that what I say to-day is said with my lips only’ (II: 84). He had assumed that a woman ‘of Viola’s scrupulous temperament [...] would feel the sacredness

to devote himself wholly to domestic cares' (MOM/I 7). If the argument of 'nature' is invoked, fathers logically need to be part of the parenthood equation. Moreover, if the wholesale sacrifice of a sex is to be demanded, 'we must consider the fact that the actual production of the race is performed by women' — so if all women are expected to become mothers, the fact that they undergo the physical aspects of childbearing means it would only be fair to make men take care of the children afterwards (MOM/I 7). If the biological foundation of reproduction is going to be used as a basis for gender differentiation, Caird argues, there must be a better reason than the fact that one sex plays a larger role in the initial period of reproduction. Herbert Spencer, in 'Psychology of the Sexes', argued that women possessed 'a mental specialization, joined with the bodily specialization', and that, as a result, women were better suited than men to raising children (32). Although Spencer acknowledges that the parental instinct is shared by both sexes, he concludes that 'the particular form of it which responds to infantine helplessness is more dominant in women' (32). By contesting the position that maternal care is rooted in female biology, Caird questions why the biological role played by the father is given so little importance in comparison.

In spite of the attention Caird pays to issues of maternity and their relation to the training of women, however, she does not offer much of a solution. Apart from the early statement in WNL to hire a person capable of looking after house and children, she makes no other specific suggestion about the issue, even in DOD (her only other novel in which children play any significant role). Angelique Richardson, in an article on

of the oaths she was taking' (II: 85). Her duty, however, has a limit—she will, after the ceremony, obey the letter of the law as his wife, but her spirit promises nothing.

eugenic ideas in Caird's work, offers an explanation as to why Caird never answers the question of motherhood: 'Caird's adoption of a "homeopathic" model of writing, of mimesis, leads her to describe what was, rather than [sic] what ought to be, in her novels, without offering explicit solutions: a new motherhood would be achieved after an equitable relation between the sexes has been reached, but her emphasis is on the present, not the future' ('People Talk' 206). As discussed earlier, Caird has little interest in prescribing quick methods of social change, instead favouring an encouragement of a social framework in which evolution can proceed. However, this is not sufficient to explain why Caird has no real answer to how to deal with motherhood, given that she suggests radical revisions of marriage and of the alleged evolutionary struggle between women for male attention (both discussed below). Hadria's approaches to her biological children as well as her 'daughter' are deeply affected by her reaction to her social training, yet Caird offers no way to reverse this situation. It is possible that Caird simply sees little place for motherhood within the lives of the types of women she chooses as heroines, and thus paid scant attention to integrating a 'new' motherhood into her vision of New Womanhood. She makes it clear that characters such as Leonore and Hadria, had they been freed from the sequence of social training which led to their motherhood, would have made other choices. Apart from Bessie, her female protagonists rarely yearn for the traditional domestic life, seeking instead intellectual development and emotional understanding. Only women such as Mrs. Sedley or Mrs. Fullerton, who accept the restrictions placed upon them and seek to instil the same conventional beliefs in their daughters, have children. Caird seems to be implying, then, that while the social

construction of women raises motherhood to the ultimate feminine role, this ideal would be dispensed with by many women if they were allowed to develop their own ideas.

Caird explicitly depicts the results of the gender construction of women as destructive to the individual and to the social network. While many women become resigned to their fate, even encouraging this training in the next generation, Caird sees this as a part of the continual struggle for individual identity within a society that demands conformity to specific gender roles. The internalisation of these roles is, to Caird, one of the primary ways in which the cycle perpetuates itself. Partway through *DOD*, Hadria moves to Paris in order to pursue a career as a composer. She refuses to return home even when her sister-in-law pleads with her to do so: 'I fear that Hubert must be prepared to endure the consequences of his actions, like the rest of us. It is the custom, I know, for the sex that men call weaker, to saddle themselves with the consequences of men's deeds, but I think we should have a saner, and a juster world if the custom were discontinued' (353). Hadria is one of Caird's most articulate heroines, capable of analysing her social framework and recognising the futility of remaining within it if she wishes to pursue her musical work, and above all aware that she was the victim of fraudulent representation on the part of her husband. Even so, she 'commenced the attack on herself as soon as Henriette had departed', and all her awareness of the external impetus for her self-chastisement cannot prevent her from facing her internalised guilt (355). The consciousness of knowing how she has been enslaved, mingled with the inability to deny what she has been taught, is one of Caird's most effective depictions of the strength of social conditioning.

In spite of her defiant statement of independence, Hadria finds herself compelled to rush back to Scotland when her mother becomes ill and the family fortunes crash:

Almost before the full significance of the calamity had been realized, a telegram arrived, announcing that Mrs. Fullerton had fallen dangerously ill.

The rest of that day was spent in packing, writing notes, settling accounts, and preparing for departure. (356)

The use of passive voice is significant, removing Hadria's agency. That Caird provides no explanation about Hadria's mental processes in making her decision, or even a hint of her specific motivations—in spite of devoting dozens of pages to Hadria's refutations of the position of modern women—underscores the extent to which training is ingrained, even in women who are able to understand and discuss their conditioning theoretically. In spite of her perspicacity, Hadria is ultimately powerless to do anything other than her 'duty', which is bound up in her love for her mother. Her capacity for rational thought, while keenly honed, is ultimately overpowered by her deeply-rooted emotional responses.

Even Margaret in AROTM, who demonstrates her independence by supporting herself through sketching the Yorkshire landscape, finds that her early training has cast a permanent shadow over her life. Through this emancipated heroine, Caird offers a minute examination of how such influences remain dormant, no matter how much a woman actively works to remove or alter them:

In Margaret Ellwood's case there were at least three distinct layers of influence at work: the unnoted, but never effaced traces of her early training [...]; the violent reaction against that training, impelling to a wholesale overthrow of the old narrow ideal of womanly conduct; and finally, the new, more gentle rebound from the vulgarer sort of Bohemianism with which she had become more or less familiar through her husband's associates. [...] What

appeared to be the strongest motives sent no representatives to the final result; while those shadowy, half-conscious forces, dating far back in her history, even to early childhood, seemed to prevail almost without an effort, as if they had a secret service of nerve messages by which the whole being was automatically ruled. (75-77)

Although Margaret succeeds in urging the other protagonists in AROTM to reject their own 'early training', Caird emphasises that any such success is achieved only through a supreme effort, and still has repercussions throughout one's life. Moreover, although AROTM ends on a highly optimistic note, the fate of later heroines such as Hadria and Anna¹⁰¹ indicate that Caird is not willing to ignore the damage done to women by their training. It is impossible, in her opinion, for any woman trained to specific gender roles ever to free herself completely from them.

Even more insidious, however, is Caird's contention that women are so well trained that they themselves uphold the restrictions placed upon their actions. Women become self-policing, acting as the incarnation of Mrs. Grundy in their attention to correct behaviour and their coercion of any woman who seeks to rebel against it. WOA and DOD in particular have several such arbiters of social behaviour among the secondary characters, as well as the heroines' own mothers. Mrs. Fullerton, Hadria's mother, is depicted as having once had a vibrant personality and a love of art, which were stamped out by her concession to the training provided by her husband: 'In her youth, Mrs. Fullerton had shewn signs of qualities which had since been submerged.

¹⁰¹ Anna's situation resembles Hadria's. Though fully aware that her sister Caroline contributed to the situation that left her a destitute widow with several children, Anna cannot prevent herself from giving all of her disposable income to assist, even though that imperils her own health: 'Why should the one reasonable member of the party destroy her whole life and hopes, for the sake of the irredeemably absurd being whom they had agreed to call x? Let x be a negligible [sic] quantity.... "I only wish she were!"

Her husband had influenced her development profoundly, to the apparent stifling of every native tendency. A few volumes of poetry, and other works of imagination, bore testimony to the lost sides of her nature' (DOD 33). However, rather than encouraging her daughters—in whom 'buried impulses had broken out, like a half-smothered flame'—to explore what she herself had been forbidden, she has learned only to forbid the same in them: 'the mother regarded these qualities, partly inherited from herself, as erratic and annoying. The memory of her own youth taught her no sympathy' (33).

Women who have internalised their position believe that this is the only true role for women, and thus any deviance in their daughters must be erased, possibly in part out of a latent jealousy that their daughters might gain a freedom they themselves were denied. Hadria decries this endless cycle when Algitha, who is bracing herself to tell their mother that she will be going to London, wavers in her decision on the grounds that 'we owe everything to her'; Hadria sees clearly that this is the key issue: 'A mother disappointed in her children must be a desperately unhappy woman. She has nothing left; for has she not resigned everything for them? But is sacrifice to follow on sacrifice? Is life to go rolling after life, like the cheeses that the idiot in the fable sent running downhill, the one to fetch the other back?' (38). Women are so thoroughly indoctrinated that they not only adhere to what they have been taught, but enforce those teachings on the next generation. The daughters generally obey, as Caird indicates through a reference that the young Viola Sedley's 'behaviour was a grotesque caricature of her mother's whole life' (WOA I: 132).

exclaimed Anna. "The problem is then simple. Only one must severely neglect x." But that was what Anna could not bring herself to do' (POTG 255).

Caird suggests that compromise between the needs of the individual and the tenets of gender construction is impossible, for any deviation from the latter is resented. Mrs. G.S. Reaney's advice manual Our Daughters: Their Lives Here and Hereafter (1881) expresses the view that it is not only the action which counts, but the spirit in which it is done. While 'the loving daughter' will without question 'give up her time in searching for the missing glasses' of her grandmother (160), only complete devotion can prove her worthiness: 'the giving is not done grudgingly or of necessity but with a glad spontaneous yielding up of one's own will and way' (161). Hadria discovers that failing to follow this rule causes strife in her household. When she attempts to carve out time from household tasks for her musical composition, for example, she finds that she is denied any way to construct a private life within her public duties as 'daughter'. Even to suggest that the household tasks be reorganised is considered a betrayal, and her wish for solitude to pursue her own interests is judged by her mother as being 'selfishly pre-occupied' (DOD 109). The fact of being the sole remaining daughter at home is no explanation for the insistence on her complete fulfilment of her role, for Harriet in SOS finds herself similarly pressured to behave like a 'proper' woman, even though every one of her sisters adheres without question to accepted norms: 'Mother has seven daughters to fuss about the house, without me. Seven of them, all at the Sphere!' (50). Hadria learns that the sacrifice demanded of women is expected to be complete, or else it is seen as betrayal: "'If you grudge the little services you do for me, pray abandon them,'" said the mother, genuinely hurt' (DOD 110). Only by sitting up at night and damaging her health can Hadria compose. She aptly titles her result — 'a singular and

most melancholy composition' — 'Futility' (46).

What the sacrifice of women ultimately indicates, for Caird, is that women are treated as interchangeable units whose role is to perform their primary biological function of maternity. They are expected to follow their 'allotted' path, serving others, bearing and raising children, and above all accepting and perpetuating the social structure in which they exist. Individuality, originality, and any contribution to the development of others is nearly impossible under these conditions, and when it is achieved it comes at great cost. Hadria's comparison of training women and poodles quoted above (DOD 23) is apt on a deeper level than merely the wielding of a clever metaphor: it underlines Caird's belief that when women are constrained to be no more than wives and mothers, they become little more than animals who do as they are told from an obedience shaped by command, rather than free will.

Caird's solution to the problem of gender construction is to offer alternative ways of living, through which women can subvert their training as best they can. She does not specify how the next generation will directly benefit from the change, for none of her 'freed' New Women have or want children; there is no example of a Caird heroine who, like Grant Allen's 'woman who did', uses her emancipated ideas to mould the next generation. However, Caird indicates that these alternatives to 'traditional' womanly roles will improve society, and that the change will help pave the way for future developments. The final section of this chapter will therefore examine how women can break away from their 'fixed' roles, and in so doing, develop their own lives as well as extending these opportunities to other women.

Female friendship and ideal marriage: breaking free from gender construction

Caird believes that the first step in freeing women is to reject the demand that girls need to be trained to a fixed pattern of feminine behaviour. Instead, girls should be allowed to develop without strict boundaries, according to their individual natures. In WNL, Leonore's own 'wild' development is reflected in her relationship with the natural world: 'She had never been "brought up;" she had scrambled up by herself, like some wild weed of the field or marsh, and all her ways were as untaught and unstudied as the festooned graces of the bryony in her favourite forest solitudes. The fresh, natural vigour of human feeling and human thought was possessing her, springing up in her heart like the limpid brook that gushes out of the earth, sparkling and laughing in the face of the sun' (I: 28). Freed from the social conventions that were to cause Viola such anguish exemplified in the forced kiss, Leonore meets Crawford Stevens and can reveal, rather than repress, the ideas which have emerged from her independent thinking: 'She finds herself in course of time unfolding to him some of her own eager thoughts, those vivid dreams and fancies that beset a mind still growing and sending forth strong young fibres into the surrounding soil. [...] It was a relief to find some vent for the feelings and longings that were bubbling up within her' (I: 25-26). The ability to think without restrictions, and the opportunity to share her developing thoughts with a sympathetic listener, assist Leonore in deepening her individuality. This need for natural development is a smaller version of Caird's vision of what is required to promote the evolution of humanity: providing freedom for self-determination, rather than forcing

everyone into a uniform identity.

The need for natural, unhindered growth is part of the reason why Leonore's mother (known in the book as the Signora) leaves her daughter with Mrs. Braithwaite, the woman who eventually becomes Leonore's stepmother. Mrs. Braithwaite would not care enough about Leonore to mould her into an ideal feminine form, and such neglect would be far better for Leonore than any attempt to 'bring her up': 'I knew my enemy would never trouble her head about the child, and that the nurse hated Mrs. Braithwaite, and was certain to keep her charge well out of her way. Leonore would be allowed to grow up according to her nature, and I desired nothing better; for I had, and still have, a strong repugnance to the strict, hard, artificial training generally given to young English girls' (III: 88).¹⁰² Such an upbringing does not entirely spare Leonore from the net of duty and self-sacrifice,¹⁰³ but in Caird's world view it is infinitely preferable to the 'strict, hard, artificial training' given to girls such as Viola Sedley.

In promoting natural development over constrictive training, Caird puts into action her views that mother is not required to devote herself to her child, and that in fact if the mother's care has the potential to damage the child, the best possible course of action is for the mother to give the child up. In WNL, prior to the start of the story, the

¹⁰² The Signora is Italian; Caird's love of the continent, which she uses as a setting in four novels, and her conception that its ideals are inherently different from that of her own country clearly informs her distinction between Leonore's birth mother and her English stepmother.

¹⁰³ As mentioned, WNL is Caird's first novel, and many of her ideas exist here in a nascent form. That she used this work to discuss a wide range of concepts she found important can be seen from a summary of the book produced by her publisher (Longmans, Green), which includes not only an extensive summary, but an entire paragraph of topics they could not include in that summary for lack of space (Notes on Books 225). Therefore, while it is inconsistent for Caird to begin this three-volume novel with assertions that Leonore has not been trained to ideal femininity and then to end it with Leonore's struggle against her emotional bondage, the important point is Caird's early attention to both of these themes, which she developed and integrated far more powerfully in her later work.

Signora fakes her suicide and returns to Italy, allowing her family to think her dead.

Part of her motivation is that she understands that her presence would make Leonore's life more difficult. Caird thus provides an example of how a mother's love is not necessarily indicated by close guidance, but by absence: 'for I felt, as I saw her growing up before my eyes and developing a nature as nervous and passionate as my own, that were I to remain under my husband's roof, I should doom the child to pass the first impressionable years, which should be so healthy and happy, in a miserable, disordered home. It was my presence that made it miserable' (III: 87). The Signora's love is demonstrated by her lack of egotism; she does not require her child to be her possession, but loves Leonore enough to do what is best for her, even though that means depriving herself of her child's company.

Although little is known about Caird's personal life, this need to allow for a child's natural growth appears to have been the reflection of her own child-rearing methods.¹⁰⁴ Gertrude Atherton's memoir Adventures of a Novelist (1932) provides an exclusive account of Caird's beliefs and how they may have been put into practice.¹⁰⁵ Writing of a visit paid to London in 1889, Atherton claims that five-year-old Alister Caird was being raised in an unconventional manner—one based entirely on his mother's views:

¹⁰⁴ While ideas in life and those expressed in fiction must be maintained as distinct—for even autobiographical fiction is adapted to conform to the conventional structure of novels—paying attention to the approaches taken by Caird with regard to her own son allows for a different perspective on topics which she considered important enough to incorporate into her fiction. It is impossible to determine whether her change in attitude towards the 'training' of children, as hinted at in the changes made between the two versions of 'The Morality of Marriage' (mentioned above) reflect her own experience in raising her son Alister. It is, however, tempting to interpret along these lines.

¹⁰⁵ This visit forms the core of the discussion in Rosenberg, 'A Challenge to Victorian Motherhood: Mona Caird and Gertrude Atherton,' Women's Writing 12 (2005): 485-504.

Mrs. Caird was proud of the fact that she had evolved out of her own inner consciousness a new way to bring up children; this solitary offspring of hers had never been cuddled, coddled, punished, crossed, admonished, or coerced by rules of any kind. He was to bring himself up and be one of her minor offerings to a benighted world. (172-73)

Atherton's highly subjective memoir reveals a deeply ambivalent relationship with the figure of the 'ideal' mother, particularly in regard to mothers who—like herself—pursue writing careers. Her interpretation of Caird's mothering practices therefore needs to be considered in light of this wider social construct.¹⁰⁶ However, Atherton's comments indicate that Caird's theoretical approach to childhood development may well have been acted out on a practical level. Caird viewed a child not as a tabula rasa on which to imprint social ideals, but as an individual possessed with an innate personality which could only be fully expressed in the absence of training towards the formation of a particular character.

In her novels, for those characters who lack Leonore's opportunity to 'grow wild', Caird suggests physical separation from one's family as a way for her heroines to escape imposed gender construction. Foreign travel, for instance, allows women them to distance themselves from their families and from the local society which reinforces their gender roles. Several of Caird's characters—including Leonore in WNL, Claudia in SOS, and Algitha in DOD—escape to London, while Hadria in DOD moves across the Channel to Paris, and both Oenone in OTW and Anna in POTG refer to previous

¹⁰⁶ For instance, in both this situation and one involving an unnamed 'eminent feminist' (possibly Charlotte Perkins Gilman), Atherton places herself as the 'good' mother who nurtures children abandoned by their career-oriented mothers. This superiority, though, directly contrasts with Atherton's obvious glee about her ignorance that holding a child upside down was not permitted, and with her unemotional decision to leave her daughter in California so that she could travel to Europe.

experiences in Russia.¹⁰⁷ For Leonore, the adventure in London provides her with ‘matchless joy’ and the ‘intense pleasure of being utterly and entirely free’ (WNL I: 106). Far from exposing her to danger, or prompting guilt from disobeying demands to remain at home, the adventure allows Leonore to develop her own personal relationship with the world: ‘a sort of instinct seemed to tell me how to avoid any disagreeables: and of course I was well on my guard, feeling that I was thrown entirely on my own resources—that, in short, I was free. Everything was new and full of interest to me’ (I: 106). The ‘instinct’ that keeps Leonore safe can only develop and be expressed when she is allowed this freedom. However, because women (particularly young and unmarried ones) are not conventionally allowed such liberty, society does not interpret solo journeys in any beneficial light. Leonore is believed to have run away to London because of a romantic elopement; as with Viola’s rejection of Philip Dendraith’s kiss, Leonore’s actions are interpreted only through artificial models of what a woman’s behaviour should demonstrate. Caird shows instead that solo travel can be a means of independent self-discovery, and a source of physical and mental development for women.

Caird expands this theme from the basic pleasures of a journey to in-depth explorations of how women must set aside social constructions in order to achieve their personal goals. Two of her earliest heroines, Leonore in WNL and Oenone in OTW, possess the financial ability to leave home without being beholden to others for

¹⁰⁷ Caird herself made frequent trips to the continent. Her known travels between 1888 and 1891, for instance, included Lugano, Italy (Forward, ‘Attitudes’ 64), ‘a flying visit to Paris and Boulogne’ (‘To-day’s Tittle-Tattle’, 27 May 1889), another continental visit later that year, and a return to Italy in the winter of 1890-91 (Crawford 195).

permission. More significantly, they are spared the guilt that strikes many daughters who leave home, as their unsympathetic stepmothers do not bind them with the same 'chains of Love' which were to be so crippling for Viola and Hadria. Moreover, unlike Hadria, who must remain with her husband because any further disruption would cause her mother to suffer a fatal relapse, Leonore and Oenone lack close family members who might emotionally blackmail them. Later heroines such as Anna in POTG and Algitha in DOD, who are more restricted financially and emotionally, gain even more from their journeys because leaving home allows them to gain perspective on their situations. Anna's temporary success at escaping her home life allows her 'to realise my own powers among other things' (97). Algitha's reason for going to London is to do charitable work, but although her work will be philanthropic, Caird is clear that Algitha does not intend to merely shift domestic duty into the public sphere. Such a rationale would provide a reason for a woman to leave home that would nevertheless keep her restricted within the boundaries of self-sacrifice and duty to others. Rather, Algitha's primary motivation is self-exploration:

"I don't want to pose as a philanthropist," she added, "though I honestly do desire to be of service. I want to spread my wings. And why should I not? Nobody turns pale when Ernest [her brother] wants to spread his. How do I know what my life is like, or how best to use it, if I remain satisfied with my present ignorance? How can I even appreciate what I possess, if I have nothing to compare it with? Of course, the truly nice and womanly thing to do, is to remain at home, waiting to be married. I have elected to be unwomanly.'" (DOD 31).

Algitha looks to her time in London as a period in which to gain knowledge that she has no opportunity to learn at home. The difference between her chance 'to spread my wings' and her default option, 'to remain at home, waiting to be married', sums up

Caird's views—travel combined with useful work provides the opportunity for mental growth and independent action, freeing women from the passivity and uselessness of home life.

Employment in the public sphere became an increasingly significant option for middle-class women at the end of the nineteenth century. As detailed by Lee Holcombe in Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850-1914 (1973), employment opportunities in this period included clerical work, teaching, nursing, journalism, and shop work. However, Caird addresses none of these possibilities, and the meagre attention she pays to employment focuses on how women are trained not to be employed, rather than how employment might further their ability to break out of that training. For instance, as discussed, Hadria and Viola express the desire to work, but both characters request menial jobs rather than suggesting more challenging alternatives. Viola's possible ways to support herself offer little more than the menial skills of gardener, servant, and nursemaid, but they do reflect Caird's concern with Viola's limited knowledge of the world. However, Hadria's similar approach to work is far less realistic. She has high intelligence and a significant ability for critical thought; the novel opens with her analysis of the ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and offers dozens of debates about woman's position in modern society. Yet Hadria does not consider moving to the city and learning to type, or studying at Girton; instead, the options she claims she would take to avoid being sacrificed on the altar of marriage moves her to the bottom of the social scale: 'I would rather sweep a crossing, I would rather beg in the streets, than submit to the indignity of such a life!' (70). Hadria can, of

course, be forgiven some hyperbole, but it remains puzzling that Caird declines entirely to give her characters the remotest chance of a modern career, even to approach it as a theoretical option. In 'The Duel of the Sexes—A Comment', a review of Lucas Malet's novel The Wages of Sin (1890),¹⁰⁸ Caird reduces Malet's discussion of 'modern bread-earners' to, in her own phrase, 'girls employed in offices and so forth' (112). This is quite a narrow view of the opportunities available to women of this period. Caird clearly did not feel these alternatives entirely suitable as a solution to the problem she recognised for women trapped in gender roles, and that she did not see such work as promoting women's freedom or releasing them from domestic drudgery.¹⁰⁹

The main area in which Caird's heroines seek work for financial reasons is when they are artists. In Paris, Hadria writes articles to support her studies as a composer, while the widow Margaret Ellwood in AROTM makes her living by sketching the Yorkshire moors. Margaret chastises Dick, who in spite of being a farmer's son has a university education, for judging her to be 'one of the idle sort' because of her choice of career: 'If you knew what a hard-working life I lead, and how I am at this moment completely tired out, perhaps you would treat my efforts with a little more respect. It

¹⁰⁸ Pseudonym of Mary St. Leger Kingsley Harrison (1852-1931). For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 25: 519-20.

¹⁰⁹ Other New Woman writers considered work to be of primary importance in the emancipation of women. A Writer of Books (1895) by George Paston (Emily Morse Symonds) illustrates a much more explicit treatment. Following the death of her librarian father, Cosima Chudleigh, who is well-educated but possesses only two hundred pounds, is determined to go to London, where she hopes to become self-supporting as a writer within two years: 'Her one desire was to get away from her present surroundings, begin a new existence, and lay the foundations of a career. She was of age, and no one had any right to coerce her' (9). Cosima's struggles are followed in painful detail, and her life as a woman (including her marriage to a dull childhood friend) is placed against her development as a writer. An even more practical example is given by George Gissing in The Odd Women. Rhoda Nunn 'worked desperately for a year' on the small sum left to her by her mother, learning practical subjects such as shorthand and commercial correspondence, not only to earn a living but to regain her health after years as a teacher (23). Her career

isn't only people with spades and pickaxes who work, you know' (56). Algitha's motivations for leaving home are partly because her work there is of even less value than that of the servants: 'there was nothing that she did that the housekeeper could not do better. She felt herself fretting and growing irritable, for mere want of some active employment. This was utterly absurd, in an overworked world' (30). Her other reason, though, is that unlike her sister, she cannot be self-sufficient in her work: 'Hadria had her music and her study, at any rate, but Algitha had nothing that seemed worth doing; she did not care to paint indifferently on china; she was a mere encumbrance—a destroyer, as Hadria put it—while there was so much, so very much, that waited to be done' (30). Caird draws a dichotomy between those who create and those who destroy. While she does not dwell upon the metaphor to a great extent, she clearly considers Algitha's charitable work in London to be second-best to artistic creation. Caird is clear that art, even when pursued to earn a living, is not equitable to the futile rounds of domestic labour, for it is 'work of the mind, of the artistic powers, that was a tonic to the whole being' (DOD 323). When art is pursued as a vocation, it becomes a powerful method for women to break out of rigid gender roles and create their own identities. However, while creation is superior to many other ways of life, it cannot be acquired even by a strong-willed heroine unless some natural talent is already present; therefore, it cannot be Caird's main solution to the problem of gender construction.

Caird offers two significant ways in which women can break out of artificial social roles to create autonomous lives for themselves. The first is the development of

path eventually leads her to become a partner in an enterprise to teach women similarly useful skills, although Gissing sees her agency as part of the problem of modern living rather than as a solution to it.

female friendship. This type of relationship breaks the exclusive hold of marriage as the primary relationship in a woman's life, and frees her from the Darwinian 'natural' role of making herself attractive to men in order to be selected as a mate. By rejecting the demand that a woman is required to subordinate herself to male desire, space is provided for women to share their experiences, explore new variations of life, and help each other. The relationship of Bessie and Margaret in *AROTM* follows these lines; rather than becoming rivals for Dick, the man they both love, the women build their own relationship and gain understanding about each other and themselves.

Caird's closest examination of this solution is found in *OTW*. She sets up a duality between Nelly Erskine, an English girl, and Oenone Evelyn, an expatriate Englishwoman who has established her own studio and salon in Rome. Oenone interprets Nelly as a 'type', trained to unquestioning obedience, easily defined and lacking individuality: 'there is not much difference between such women;—just the slight differences that come from differences in training, as there are varieties in the pins and buttons of rival manufactories' (I: 191). Nelly is certainly aware of the social codes in which she lives; for instance, when Mrs. Erskine rejects an outing because of a headache, Nelly and her sister 'made no protest, evidently regarding the headache in the light of an inexorable Fate from which there was no appeal' (I: 132). Nelly's seeming inability to question the rules by which she has been taught to live hints that she will, in turn, enforce those 'ordained' rules with the same inflexible approach. Oenone, on the other hand, left home when her relationship with her stepmother became intolerable, and

endured a difficult marriage before leading an independent life as an artist.¹¹⁰ That Nelly marries Launcelot, who Oenone rejected as a potential husband in spite of her love for him, and that Oenone is named after a jealous ancestress who murdered her lover, appears to set up a dramatic climax in which the two women—representing a duality of chaste good and wild evil—will battle for the love of Launcelot.

However, Caird rejects this denouement. As she was to claim in her defence of ‘wild women’, it is ridiculous to see women fixed in single roles, stereotyped in appearance and behaviour. Doing so would lead to the result demonstrated by Eliza Lynn Linton: ‘to divide women, roughly, into two great classes: the good, beautiful, submissive, charming, noble, and wise, on the one hand; and on the other, the bad, ugly, rebellious, ill-mannered, ungenerous, foolish, and liberty-demanding’ (MOM/DOWW 161). The differences between Nelly and Oenone appear to fall into this dichotomy, but Caird chooses instead to draw both of her heroines as combining both admirable and dangerous traits. Her insistence in doing so hints at her belief that women encompass the full range of attitudes and emotions, rather than expressing only certain elements.

Among Nelly’s positive traits is a refusal to take on the expected ‘wifely’ role of being possessive about her husband’s friendships with other women. She understands that Oenone and Launcelot share a connection that she herself can never be part of. The fact that she has married Launcelot should not, she believes, require him to cut himself

¹¹⁰ As mentioned, both Oenone and Anna in POTG spent time in Russia; although Caird never set a work of fiction there, she clearly had a great respect for the heroes of that country. In her introduction to Sophie Wassilieff’s ‘Memoirs of a Female Nihilist’, serialised in the *Idler* (1893), she wonders if her subject will ‘resemble the heroines of Russian political history whose marvellous courage and endurance excite the wonder of all who can even dimly realise what it must be to live from moment to moment in imminent peril of life and limb’ (431-32).

off from that communion with Oenone: ‘Why had they been everything to one another except lovers?—and why should that exception have the effect of separating them for their whole lives? On what grounds must it be all or nothing?’ (II: 148). Nelly’s refusal to insist that her husband can have no other woman in his life but herself means that she can develop beyond the roles society expects to be played by wives. Oenone, meanwhile, has herself questioned that same social code: ‘Can a man never care for a woman unless he is allowed to talk to her about loves and raptures, and passions and eternities?’ (I: 185). Because she and Nelly both reject such a limited state for women, she can play a more flexible role which allows for intimacy between herself and Launcelot, rather than being restricted to the position of mistress or jealous ex-lover. The tenets of society are excluded from the women’s negotiations through Caird locating this section of the novel in an Italian village; Launcelot, too, is absent in the final chapters, reappearing only on the book’s final page. By breaking out of social expectations about what their relationship ought to be, Oenone and Nelly can relate to each other on an individual level, shaping their own arrangements without intrusion.

Nelly, aware that the process of growth initiated by her marriage must continue to develop, hopes to associate herself with a woman who has herself advanced beyond a ‘traditional’ womanly role: ‘I have told you how the aspect of things has changed to me; how old landmarks have been swept away, and how I have to begin to learn my geography all over again. Before, it was political geography, wherein boundaries were arbitrary; now it must be physical geography, where the boundaries are real. [...] Well, I want a woman to help me to learn my new lesson; a woman who has learnt it before

me, and who has both suffered and enjoyed deeply' (II: 171). Oenone, in turn, discovers that even English girls can develop beyond the boundaries of their training:¹¹¹ 'I see my folly in taking for granted that your circumstances had made you—they do most people. My mistake was not so very unnatural, as you will admit; I doubt whether there lives another woman in all England—brought up as you were—who would not now entrench herself behind her wifehood, as behind an altar' (II: 201). The mutuality of their need for each other's assistance allows them both to benefit.

By wiping away the destructive jealousy that nearly causes her to bring about Nelly's death, Oenone—like Nelly—learns a 'new lesson', one which opens up the rest of her life: 'What is the power in you that seems—if one will but yield to it—to still the pain and the passion, and make one almost dare to believe that life need not be lived in vain—nay, that it even has promises of joy to such as I?' (II: 221). The power within Nelly, when freed from external restrictions, allows both women to find a happiness unencumbered by how the world believes they should behave towards each other, and Nelly realises that this power has allowed them to break free of an element that chains women into unhappiness: 'It is horrible that woman should be set against woman; the happiness of one bought at the expense of the happiness of the other. I will not,—I say, I will not be one of those women. We should stand—we women—hand in hand, like comrades and fellow-soldiers in the battle. And between comrades there can be no jealousy' (II: 220-21). Like Sarah Grand, Caird is offering a way for women to assist each other in their quest for emancipation, but she does so through an inherent belief that

¹¹¹ As with WNL, Caird is still dealing with themes in OTW that were to become far more developed in her later book. Nelly moves beyond her training with far less effort than the subsequent struggles made by

this must be based in respect for individual needs, not to an adherence to a fixed code of 'womanhood'.

Although the friendship of women is a powerful method of freeing oneself from gender roles, it is marriage which Caird believes to be the best way forward. This is a surprising conclusion, given her statements that modern marriage is a failure, and her repeated insistence on this belief in the face of the 'Is Marriage a Failure?' furore. However, Caird's ideal marriage moves away from the master-and-slave relationship codified by law and personally rejected by John Stuart Mill.¹¹² Her version makes 'a claim for a modified marriage' which has at its centre 'freedom [as] a feature of modern life' (MOM/M 67). This new type of marriage allows each partner to retain their personality, individuality, and interests. Instead of producing couples who 'become mere echoes, half-creatures, useless to their kind, because they have let individuality die' (MOM/M 105), Caird's ideal marriage allows partners who see each other as 'a second self, akin, but different [...] someone with whom to face life hand in hand' to build their own relationship based on their individual needs and their joint needs as a couple (AROTM 111). For women, such marriage frees them from the constraints of a particular set of requirements defining the boundaries of 'a good wife'. It completely rejects the ownership which a husband like Philip Dendraith uses as a way to keep his

Hadria in DOD and Anna in POTG.

¹¹² Mill's 1851 'Statement Repudiating the Rights of Husbands' explicitly denies all legal and social rights which men were granted, and expected to take, upon marriage: 'And in the event of marriage between Mrs. Taylor and me I declare it to be my will and intention and the condition of the engagement between us, that she retains in all respects whatever the same absolute freedom of action, and freedom of disposal of herself and of all that does or may at any time belong to her, as if no such marriage had taken place; and I absolutely disclaim and repudiate all pretence to have acquired any rights whatever by virtue of such marriage' ('Statement'). By stripping himself, as the husband, of all aspects of 'coverture' and ownership,

wife in submission, and the duty which convinces wives like Viola Dendraith and Alpin's mother in SOS that they must remain in abusive marriages, substituting for this imbalance the partnership of 'a companion, friend, and lover united in a single being' (OTW I: 189).

For the ideal marriage to become possible, both partners must reach a level of personal development where they understand that mutual freedom and individuality is the keystone of their relationship. The courtship of Nelly and Launcelot in OTW begins in earnest when he indicates that he will not allow either of them to become trapped within artificial boundaries. Nelly's hand playing against the bubbles thrown up by a fountain becomes Caird's metaphor for how marriage can free a woman from gender rigidity, if she finds a man who understands the importance of this:

They were like human lives, she thought, so round and individual, till, in a moment, the form breaks up, and the bubble melts into the general tide.

But why that fevered little journey across the basin, why that dividing into drops, if the end of it all was merely this ruthless submerging? She dipped her hand in the water that she might feel the crystal drops making their eager, helpless onslaught against it.

"My hand," she said aloud, as if she had been speaking instead of thinking all this time—"my hand is playing the part of circumstance."

"I would that circumstance were as gentle," said Launcelot, impulsively.

"Gentle!" she echoed: "look how helpless those globules are when it stands in their path; they can no more break through it, vehement as they are, than they could break through a range of mountains."

Mill is effectively revisioning marriage and the positions of both spouses. The 'natural' rights seen to belong to the husband by virtue of his greater strength are set aside in favour of equality.

“I never submit to circumstance,” cried Launcelot; “this is what I do with circumstance,” and he quietly took her hand and drew it out of the water, setting the battling globules free. (I: 170-71)

One of Caird’s primary intentions in proposing her modified marriage is to produce ‘a system less barbaric,’ and thus reorder society to prepare it for further evolution (MOM/M 109). As stated, Caird is not denying that individuals are part of a larger social order, and the fact that the bubbles exist in incalculable numbers reflects the social realities in which she works. What Caird objects to, and what Launcelot offers to do away with, is that in their present form, all the bubbles strive endlessly for a goal that can never be achieved because of their greater circumstances. If social boundaries are still firmly in place, and enforced on all levels, no woman could ever struggle free. By offering Nelly emotional independence and a marriage which can achieve not just the satori of ‘an emancipated moment, but an emancipated life-time’, Launcelot removes the circumstance which prevents her from achieving ‘the wildest dream of happiness that ever entered into the heart of man!’ (I: 206).

Nelly’s happiness comes at a cost, however, for her emotional growth soon allows her to realise the restrictions that she herself brings to their marriage. She tells her husband that ‘I am not enough for you; you want qualities that I do not possess, sympathies that I cannot give; you are half alone in my society’ (II: 145). Rather than demanding that she and Launcelot must be everything to each other, producing a closed system, she is willing to accept that this is an impossibility for two independent adults, and that he must be allowed the freedom to seek relationships elsewhere which provide him with the emotional satisfaction she cannot provide. Bringing a marriage to this stage requires that both partners reject jealousy and understand that the other person is

not theirs to own or control. When challenged about his and Nelly's decision to lead separate lives, Launcelot explains that it is Nelly's individuality which attracted him, and thus he has no wish to deplete it: 'We don't want to grind each other down like two pebbles till we have achieved for both a sort of average, [...] I fell in love with one person, not the mean of two' (II: 144). Nelly's ability to establish a friendship with Oenone, a potential rival, allows her to maintain that individuality and become a stronger person and a better wife. Marriage gives her the opportunity for growth and the ability to move in the direction she chooses.

In order to achieve a modified marriage, then, the woman must not be so restricted by her training that she is unable to see this new marriage as a beneficial advancement. In DOD, Caird provides a cautionary example of trying to establish such a marriage when the woman has not been able to develop sufficiently to recognise its advantages. Caird indicates that the Professor hoped to use marriage to emancipate the woman he loved: 'I saw that a great development was before her. I pleased myself with the thought of watching and helping it. She was built on a grand scale. To set her free from prejudice, from her injustice to herself, from her dependence on me; to teach her to breathe deep with those big lungs of hers and think bravely with that capacious brain: that was my dream. I hoped to hear her say to me some day, what I fear no woman has yet been able to say to her husband, "The day of our marriage was the birthday of my freedom"' (201). Unfortunately, this cannot occur because she has been too constricted by her artificial training. She feels that failing 'to be ruled and mastered by the man she loved' was 'a sign of [his] indifference' (197). After having an affair in a futile attempt

to evoke his jealousy, she kills herself. The tragedy occurs primarily because she had no concept of the freedom he was offering her: 'Her training had blinded her, as one is blinded in coming out of darkness into a bright light. She was used to narrower hearts and smaller brains' (197). Caird is not entirely specific on why some women are able to move away from their training more easily than others, and, as discussed, she indicates that escaping it completely is impossible. When women succeed, however, modified marriage provides them with an unparalleled opportunity for emancipation.

Marriage on the grounds Caird outlines is not only better for women than their alternatives, but in her view is objectively their best chance at freedom. Even artistic creation would need to be augmented by the companionship of a partner in order to fulfil a woman's deepest emotional needs. Margaret may claim 'I live for my work' (AROTM 109), but she loves Dick, and leaves open the possibility of a future life with him: 'We can both be ready for him with open cages—nicely painted, elegant cages, with every comfort for a vagrant eagle disposed for a quiet life. And then he can enter which he likes—or neither' (140). Caird more explicitly states in DOD that work in itself is not sufficient for a woman, when Hadria's compositions are not enough to satisfy her. She is encouraged by her Parisian teacher, but the public receives her work without rapture, a response which 'sent her back into the depths of loneliness, and reminded her how cut off she was from the great majority of her fellows' (320). Even the act of creation is not sufficient to allow a woman the necessary range for self-development.

Unlike motherhood, which as discussed has no real 'solution' in Caird's work,

the ideal marriage has a clear and concrete symbol: the flat of Alpin and Claudia in SOS, which is actually two separate flats joined together. Initially concocted as a solution to the needs of 'two busy women', the flat 'had solved the problem of combined independence and companionship by breaking down the partition between the four contiguous sitting-rooms to form a large common room, while the remaining portions of the flats were regarded as the private property of their respective occupants' (375-76). This solution to the needs of a female friendship becomes easily adapted to the similar needs of a marriage in which the partners need to maintain their own 'private property'. Because husband and wife each have their own space, there is no requirement or pressure for them to personify William Blackstone's vision of 'one person' in order to placate society. The flat frees them from the obligation 'to be publicly supported in insisting on one another's constant presence, as part of a sordid "contract"' (380).

The flat also acts as a tangible representation of the married couple's ability to maintain other relationships which are either mutual or separate, as they please. They are able to keep their own friends without requiring them to enjoy the company of the other person: 'The rebels further sinned against the traditions by having each a separate set of friends. The many they had in common formed a sort of centre to the two side-groups which Frank Brewster called "The Wings." [...] Old friends could still see either of the pair freely without "being irrelevantly involved in the other," as they expressed it' (382). Such flexibility allows both partners to develop independent relationships while still maintaining their own as central. Jealousy plays no role in the relationship, nor does the legal bond of marriage allow either partner to make claims of ownership over the

other in terms of forbidding their friendships. There could be no opportunity here for the husband to instruct his wife, as Philip Dendraith does, that she ‘will make no acquaintance, man or woman, without my knowledge’ (WOA III: 17). Although Caird does not specifically address the issue of sex, the fact that only the sitting rooms are communal space implies that each partner has a separate bedroom which, like the other private areas of the flat, is not subject to ‘systematic invasion of one another’s freedom’ (SOS 383). The flat clearly acts as a representation of the ability to maintain personal privacy, including physical autonomy, and gives each member of the couple the space to determine privately how much of themselves they will give to the other partner.

The joined flat appears to others—even to ‘people who considered themselves “advanced”’—as little better than living together unmarried (378), but to Alpin and Claudia it symbolises the entire tenor of their relationship, in which neither will be enslaved to the other by ties of duty or blackmail: ‘Being together was in their eyes a glorious privilege which must never be made into a thing of mere use and wont’ (380). The ‘ideal’ marriage ensures that the couple is together only when they desire, and not because they feel compelled. The couple will not be enslaved to each other through what they have been told is their duty, a situation Nelly articulates and rejects within her own ideal marriage: ‘I do not take my stand on my title of wife; I rest only on his love. If that were to fail, I would not raise my little finger to claim or restrain him. I can say no more. I have no wish to take advantage of a power given merely by law and public opinion’ (OTW II: 198). In spite of the vigorous symbolism of the two-in-one flat, though, Caird is adamant that the strength of this ‘individualistic marriage’ lies in the

attitude of the partners themselves, not in their physical living arrangements. One couple in Alpin and Claudia's circle were 'with difficulty dissuaded from settling respectively on opposite sides of the park', but 'the ideal did not depend on finding a twin-flat in St. John's Wood. It could be carried out in the most ordinary "home" if need be' (383). By establishing physical space which is inviolable, the couple mirror their emotional commitment to respect each other's autonomy over minds and bodies.

The physical form of the ideal marriage is supported by the ideas Caird had been writing about for thirty years prior to *SOS*, but she also understands that the reconstruction of society and its attitudes towards the role of women will move even more slowly than this time scale: 'to demand what would appear to be an immediately workable system under the new conditions, is as unreasonable as it would be to ask a cattle-lifting clan of the Middle Ages to turn over a new leaf, and earn their living on the Stock Exchange' (MOM/MOM 148). Caird's vision of a society capable of evolution was not limited to emancipated women of the fin de siècle, and her ideal marriage clearly indicates that for this to work properly, men as well as women must accept the tenets of individualism and equality. Although it is not until her final novel that she explores the ways in which men are constructed by society, the effects of that construction are visible throughout her earlier works, and by *SOS* it has become plainly evident that the New Woman cannot form an individualist marriage without the full support of a New Man. The final chapter of this thesis will move forward chronologically (though it will point to the seeds of this issue in her earlier work) to examine Caird's ideas about men's constructed roles in society, and to draw the threads

of her work together to determine her ultimate evolutionary vision for the human race.

Chapter 5: 'But Grierson did not live primarily by instinct': the gender construction of man

The moral seems to be: preserve your primitive brutality. We will call it manliness. - 'The Greater Community' (1)

In Caird's pre-war work, she offers several depictions of men who recognise and actively work to alleviate the pressure faced by women to conform to a particular gender identity. The chronological span between Austin Bradley in WNL (1883) and Alpin Dalrymple in SOS (1915) indicates the consistency of Caird's belief that men are capable of rejecting their 'right' to control their wives. These characters understand that both sexes are best served when men refuse to demand women's slavish adherence to traditional roles centred around marriage and motherhood, and encourage women instead to free themselves from their socially constructed identity. Caird's most notable example is the Professor in DOD, who unsuccessfully attempts to liberate his wife. Another such figure is Harry Lancaster in WOA, who seeks to release Viola from her belief that she must marry Philip Dendraith for the sake of her impoverished family, and actively opposes Philip's 'ownership' of his wife even before their marriage.¹¹³

However, prior to TGW, Caird did not closely analyse the reasons why some men

¹¹³ Harry makes his position clear to Philip: 'As I hold it quite unjustifiable to marry a woman who is not really free to refuse you, I hold it justifiable to rescue her by any means in one's power; she is not to be sacrificed to an artificial code of honour' (II: 58). His attempts include unsuccessfully begging Viola to speak to Sibella Lincoln—a woman who, having escaped her own abusive husband, cannot be 'known' socially—and, as a last resort, proposing to marry her solely to prevent Philip from doing so, thus offering her the freedom to 'return to your home, or do whatever else you please, without feeling that I have in any way, or at any time, a claim on you' (II: 54). Viola's training and Philip's manipulation of her ingrained obedience, however, are too strong at this point in the novel for Harry to succeed in anything more than claiming a dance with her after Philip has forbidden her to dance with anyone but himself.

accepted the equality of women while others demanded their 'rights' of ownership.

Even though she moves from female protagonists to male heroes in her final three novels—POTG (1898), SOS (1915),¹¹⁴ and TGW (1931)—only in her final work does she explore the ways in which men are pressured to conform to a particular definition of masculinity, and analyses the reason why this ideal emphasises violence and physical dominance.

Caird's close examination of this topic lifts the male protagonist from a character who reacts to female gender construction, both in decrying it and in suffering because of it,¹¹⁵ into a figure in his own right: specifically, a representative of the men whose gender training led them into the trenches of the First World War. The war was undoubtedly an important reason for Caird's shift in attention, but she was also interested in this issue for its relevance to the ideas she had been expressing throughout her career. As discussed, she was not concerned with promoting individual freedom as a way to affect a narrow sliver of society, but for its importance in preparing society's continued evolution. Grierson Elliot in TGW is the epitome of her New Man, and the ways in which he responds to gender construction affect not only himself but the possibilities for further international conflict.

The first section of the chapter addresses Caird's theories on how masculinity is specifically constructed. She investigates the ways in which men are socially trained to

¹¹⁴ Claudia and Graine are major characters in SOS, and Caird pays particular attention to their disparate attempts to break out of gender roles, but the novel places Alpin's character development on an equivalent level, so he must be considered at least a co-protagonist.

¹¹⁵ Anna in POTG, for instance, is so crippled by her training that her love for Julian acts as a destructive force (discussed in the previous chapter), while Claudia in SOS cannot be entirely dissuaded from sacrificing her own happiness (inextricably linked with that of Alpin) for the irrational demands made by her family.

conform to a gender identity which centres around their ability to use physical strength against others. This role is built on the belief that men's strength gives them a 'natural' position of authority; such a 'might makes right' belief, Caird argues, is upheld through the dual interpretative frameworks of Biblical and evolutionary theories, particularly via Darwinian theories of sexual selection. Caird rejects contemporary views of 'chivalry', demonstrating its potential for domination and abuse. Her conclusion is that society, in emphasising the importance of physical force, subverts its own potential by promoting brutality over reason. The character of Philip Dendraith in WOA is studied closely here as Caird's prime example of a man who believes that his physical strength gives him a 'natural' and moral right to dominate women. Caird demonstrates that allowing Philip to have this 'right' leads not only to his destruction, but widespread catastrophe.

Having established the parameters of the gender construction which Caird argues dictates male behaviour, the chapter moves on to address her interpretation of this artificial gender construction and her ideas on how it can be set aside in favour of more organic development. Caird focuses on the training of men through the character of Grierson Elliot in TGW, who is urged to sacrifice his scientific interests in favour of upholding his family's expectations of his army career. Caird emphasises that although men have natural tendencies towards violence, they are capable of advancing beyond those primitive instincts towards more rational responses. By setting aside the concept of man as inevitably brutal, she rejects a masculine identity that foregrounds that violence. In order to produce Caird's ideal male figure, the New Man, society must allow men to develop freely and rationally, rather than be pressured to embrace

violence.¹¹⁶ The New Man also understands the mutual benefits of giving up his 'right' to dominate others, which allows him to be the ideal partner for the New Woman, and seeks a constructive outlet for his abilities. In Grierson's case, that outlet culminates in a scientific discovery with the potential to change the course of human history by eliminating the need for future violence.

The final section of the chapter explores Caird's views on the ultimate dangers of cultivating masculine violence.¹¹⁷ TGW can be placed chronologically within a tradition of novels published a decade after the end of the First World War, the 'second wave' of war novels which include Siegfried Sassoon's Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man (1928), Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero (1929), Robert Graves' Goodbye to All That (1929), and Frederic Manning's Her Privates We (1930).¹¹⁸ These novels offer a variety of analysis on the causes and circumstances of the Great War. Caird's emphasis focuses on the catastrophe which arises from training men to see themselves as units within a greater whole, in which their only purpose is an ability to fulfil the 'masculine' role of committing and being sacrificed to violence. For Caird, the New Man must fight against this compulsion to centralise violence in his life. She particularly cautions against Darwinian theories that suggest physical struggle is the only way to bring advancement, and challenges the belief that the sacrifice of the individual is necessary for the 'greater

¹¹⁶ For sketches of a variety of New Man figures in the work of Schreiner, Grand, George Egerton, and Caird, see Stephanie Forward, 'The "New Man" in Fin-de-siècle Fiction' (1998).

¹¹⁷ TGW begins in the late nineteenth century—Grierson's childhood takes place in 'those days of the expiring nineteenth century' (11)—and ends in the aftermath of the First World War.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Ridgway's introduction to the 1984 Hogarth Press edition of Death of a Hero notes the 'virtual explosion of books about the war' which emerged in this period (3). Caird cannot, of course, be completely integrated into a sub-genre of books written by ex-soldiers, but she is also thematically distinct from the women's novels written in this period by her focus on the causes of war and its ramifications

good' of the nation and the race. As she depicts in the epilogue of *TGW*, the outcome of war is the destruction of the individual, and the corruption of men's belief in the potential for humanity's development. Caird believes that evolution can and must continue, even in the face of war, and the final pages of *TGW* bring her back to the importance of the individual's ability to bring about progress. Grierson—and Caird—want to achieve not simply a world without war, but one in which humanity advances and evolution continues without the need for struggle. Caird therefore replaces war with a revised view of Darwinian evolution which suggests the new path humanity must take.

The 'natural' violence of men

The basis of Caird's rejection of gender construction in men is a repudiation of the 'might makes right' argument. This belief holds that men are inherently stronger than women, and that this physical strength authorises their dominance, subsequently enforcing a social hierarchy in which men dominate weaker beings—other men, women, and animals—and through this method, gain control over their general environment. In the introduction to *MOM*, Caird claims that 'the argument based on the assumption that woman is, by inherent nature, physically weaker than man, and that therefore she is bound to accept whatever position man may assign to her' means that women have been forced into their narrowly restricted identity largely because of social attitudes which privilege physical domination (*MOM/I* 9). Far from the two sexes being equal, or even holding the separate-but-equal positions about which Sarah Stickney Ellis claimed that it

rather than the particularities of its experience. For an overview of woman-authored war novels see Beauman, chapter 1.

was 'absurd to compare [...] as being superior or inferior on either side', the male position has been established as superior on the grounds of strength (Education 17).

Caird's position rejects religious interpretations that gave men a superior status because of their physical capabilities. The muscular Christianity movement,¹¹⁹ for example, linked religion with male dominance and the use of force. Thomas Hughes, in Tom Brown at Oxford (1861), interrupts his narrative to explain the difference between 'musclemen' and muscular Christians. The latter were not 'the servant and fomenter of those fierce and brutal passions', but rather were guided by 'the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man's body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men' (122-23). Although strength needed to be disciplined, rather than used indiscriminately, its primary use in Hughes' formulation was upholding a masculine position, and more subtly in using one's physical capacity to mould the world into a particular model. Donald E. Hall, in discussing a contemporary review of Charles Kingsley's novel Two Years Ago (1857), notes that the reviewer sees 'an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself' as 'a central, even defining, characteristic of muscular Christianity' (7). This control included the relationship between the sexes. Women were informed by conduct manuals and religious training that their weakness entitled

¹¹⁹ Given its name by a reviewer, the movement was conceptualised by Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes as a 'vigorous, socially aware Christianity' (Vance 2). For a comprehensive examination of muscular Christianity, see Norman Vance, The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought (1985).

them 'to that consideration and protection which are understood to be due from the stronger to the weaker sex'; William Landels, in Woman's Sphere and Work, Considered in the Light of Scripture (a work which went through eight editions in the decade following its 1859 publication), cautioned that this status was determined 'not only by nature but the teaching of Scripture' (27).

Caird, however, sees chivalry and Protestant Christianity as opposing ideals. In her opinion, chivalry should not involve the use of power to control others, but rather should be an ideal which upholds the concepts of 'giving rights to the weak, demanding mercy from the strong, and founding the ideal of manliness on that of pity and service' (MOM/M 74). Such chivalry, she contends, was upheld in the historical past, but became corrupted by sixteenth-century reformers who placed woman's 'natural' role as one of subjection to men. Caird cites Martin Luther's 'enormous stress on the command to "increase and multiply"' as embodying this interpretation of woman's primary existence, 'a work which doomed them to the existence of a docile and overworked animal' (MOM/M 79). To Caird, Christian attitudes towards the power relations between the sexes reduced women to a subordinate role which was structured by pre-ordained judgements about relative weakness and strength. The concept of 'chivalry' which came to be upheld by authors such as Hughes and Kingsley, then, is in Caird's interpretation only an authoritative license for men to dominate women.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ John Ruskin's famous claim for separate spheres in Sesame and Lilies (1865) prominently places physical combat within a definition of masculinity. Ruskin demands that a man 'guards the woman' as part of his 'natural' role: 'The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. [...] his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary' (77). Biological strength is thus given a social purpose which implies an inherent sense of righteousness in the way the relationship of the sexes is ordered. Andrew Dowling, in his study of manliness in Victorian literature, cites this section of Sesame and Lilies as reflective of Victorian attitudes towards male self-discipline,

The self-regulation implied by Christian 'chivalry' allows men to determine for themselves how they will use their dominance. Caird indicates that men who fail to agree that their strength and resultant social status should be used to uphold 'pity and service' are under no obligation to restrain themselves; if society fails to chastise them, this means that both internal and external controls on the use of physical force are absent. Caird's depiction of Philip Dendraith's treatment of animals throughout WOA offers further ways to investigate her belief that men who use physical dominance over weaker creatures are tacitly sanctioned to do so, and lack a system of checks and balances to prevent them from using limitless physical force. Philip's eventual treatment of Viola when they are married is foreshadowed not only through his insistence on kissing her against her will when she is a child, but through progressive cruelties to animals: tormenting her poodle, beating his horse, and kicking her cat against a wall. The earliest of these episodes involves Philip tying the dog's legs and watching it suffer through 'a series of agitated stumbles and a state of mind simply frantic' — an act he states outright he undertakes for his own amusement. Neither of Philip's companions, who are onlookers to this incident, take the opportunity to chastise him for tormenting an animal; the 'good-natured' philosopher similarly 'seemed amused at the animal's embarrassment', while Harry Lancaster's comment 'This is a subtle and penetrating form of wit' is far from a ringing condemnation of Philip's actions (I: 88). The lack of any protest allows Philip to move on to throwing stones at the hampered dog. Only Viola herself lashes out at him, and her status as a young woman means that her

particularly with regard to 'the disciplined, hardened male who protects the passive, vulnerable woman' (14).

response is as amusing to him as the dog's—and, ultimately, as futile. Caird's implication is twofold: that social acceptance of cruelty provides no motivation for any man to change his actions, and that Harry's reluctance to be more than mildly censorious about injuries to a dog indicates that he is not a fully developed New Man, for he does not make the connection that violence on any level is inappropriate.¹²¹

Caird's use of animals as metonymic representations of women reflects a wider trope of the ways in which male force became a cultural anxiety.¹²² One of the period's most vocal anti-vivisectionists, Frances Power Cobbe, explicitly connects abuse of animals and the related treatment of women in her article 'Wife-Torture in England' (1878). Cobbe bemoans the prevailing 'notion that a man's wife is his PROPERTY, in the sense in which a horse is his property' (138), and goes on to examine the belief that this ownership conveys the right to physical violence: 'Every brutal-minded man, and

¹²¹ Harry attempts to placate Viola by telling her that her 'dog is not much hurt' (I: 91). In the second volume, he takes an active role in forcing Philip to stop beating his horse, and develops the intention of keeping Viola safe from Philip, remaining true to his commitment throughout the novel. This personal evolution shows that he could be a New Man. However, the fact that he ultimately recoils from Viola after she murders Philip demonstrates that he cannot accept the full range of her nature.

¹²² Coral Lansbury, in her account of the Edwardian vivisection movement, notes that it was often 'considered to be softheaded sentimentality when women persisted in seeing themselves as animals hunted, trapped, and tortured' (*Old Brown Dog* 84), but authors of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods frequently depicted these connections, indicating that Caird was working with a recognised tradition of associating the legal and physical helplessness of women with that of animals. In Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), for instance, the mare Ginger complains about having bits forced into her mouth, which 'hurt my tongue and my jaw [...] and if I fretted or stamped with impatience the whip was laid on' (39-40). Although the novel shows horses of both sexes treated with brutality, Sewell's depiction of Ginger offers overtly sexual images of a female being dominated by her male owner. Caird uses a common association of taming women and breaking in horses to foreshadow Philip Dendraith's character and the relationship he intends to have with Viola; when mentally tormenting the girl, he admires her 'mettle' and describes her as 'a high-spirited young animal who would be worth breaking in when she grows up. Women of this type love their masters' (WOA I: 91). Many pornographic novels written between 1870 and 1910 period portray women who, broken for male use in the same way horses were, became 'grateful victims, trained to enjoy the whip and the straps' (Lansbury, 'Gynaecology' 421); such a depiction used women's 'natural' position of weakness as a means to show the inevitability of their surrender to male force. For a discussion of connections between the medical profession, pornographic

many a man who in other relations of life is not brutal, entertains more or less vaguely the notion that his wife is his thing, and is ready to ask with indignation [...], “May I not do what I will with my own?”” (138-39). However, although Cobbe uses her essay to reject the social sanction that marriage allows husbands to commit acts of violence, she does not consider this to be a universal tendency. Instead, she separates ‘the better sort of Englishmen [who] are thus exceptionally humane and considerate to women’, from ‘the men of the lower class of the same nation [who] are proverbial for their unparalleled brutality’ (132). By segregating men in terms of class, Cobbe is arguing that fundamental characteristics differ between these groups. Caird, in contrast, believes that the sanction of violence affects the upper classes as well; through the figure of Philip Dendraith,¹²³ she denies Cobbe’s claim that wife-beating in the middle and upper classes ‘rarely extends to anything beyond an occasional blow or two’ (134). In this way, Caird instead incorporates male violence into WOA as a systematic form of abuse which is tacitly accepted by ‘good’ society.

In depicting the licensing of physical domination in men as detrimental to the relations between the sexes, Caird is rejecting a major plank in Charles Darwin’s theories of sexual selection. In The Descent of Man (1871), Darwin establishes that males gained an evolutionary advantage over females because of their physical and

imagery, and vivisection, see Lansbury, ‘Gynaecology, Pornography, and the Antivivisection Movement’ (1985).

¹²³ Philip’s father ascended to his title and holdings only after the death of a distant cousin and a lifetime of furnished houses. Lady Clevedon immediately denounces Sir Philip as a parvenu, but lauds Philip himself as a gentleman — a definition Harry Lancaster decries. In describing Philip as ‘Not like either of his parents’ and identifying him instead with a distant Dendraith ancestor, Lady Clevedon suggests that the ‘type’ has been passed down (I: 40). Philip’s position as landed gentry is therefore established not simply through his father’s inheritance of the estate, but through his reversion to an earlier manifestation of superior birth.

mental superiority. This allowed men to continue to take control, particularly in the ability of selecting partners who would be most suited for bearing his children: 'Man is more powerful in body and mind than woman, and in the savage state he keeps her in a far more abject state of bondage, than does the male of any other animal; therefore it is not surprising that he should have gained the power of selection' (665).¹²⁴ This imbalance in physical strength, leading to male domination of women, is to Darwin integral to the development of the race:

There can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with his broader shoulders, more developed muscles, rugged outline of body, his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from his half-human male ancestors. These characters would, however, have been preserved or even augmented during the long ages of man's savagery, by the success of the strongest and boldest men, both in the general struggle for life and in their contests for wives. (628)

Darwin's theories of human development stem from a pre-human ancestry in which physical dominance played an essential role in evolution. Male strength is thus held up as a foundation without which the race could never have become fully human. The physical differences between the sexes become both the cause of their separate roles in civilised society, and the result of their distinctive roles within the struggle to evolve.

Social theorists and scientists who built on Darwin's ideas later in the century

¹²⁴ Caird challenges Darwin's claim that men are physically superior. She notes in 'Marriage', citing previous civilisations, that women have been trained into physical weakness. Like the artificial training towards 'natural' motherhood discussed in the previous chapter, the 'weakness' of women proves only that women have been taught to be weak: 'In Egypt, Spain, Germany, at different epochs, we have records which amply prove Dr. Richardson's contention, that physical strength, in either sex, depends on the method of training in early life, and that there is nothing to prevent women, in the course of a few generations, from recovering the physical power which their mode of existence, and the ill-usage suffered during the long patriarchal ages, have combined to destroy' (MOM/M 69). (Dr. Richardson and his work remain untraced.) Although Caird does not offer any further evidence for her claim, her contention that

also centralised the physical dominance of men in arguments about the relative position of the sexes. Many turned these biological differences into explanations for the different places held by men and women in the social order. George J. Romanes, considering 'Mental Differences Between Men and Women' (1887), grounds his opinions about intellectual capacity in the alleged physical inferiority of women. Because 'the average brain-weight of women is about five ounces less than that of men', Romanes argues, women lack the ability to think or reason as men do (170).¹²⁵ Romanes' theories about brain weight bolster his opinion that because 'the general physique of women is less robust than that of men', women are 'therefore less able to sustain the fatigue of serious or prolonged brain action' (170). Physical disparity between the sexes forms the basis for his interpretation of the ideal relationship between the genders: men surpass women in intellectual accomplishments, but women have greater perception, emotion, and intuition, leading them to acquire 'a fulness of emotional life, the whole quality of which is distinctly feminine' through her motherhood (181).

Using similar language and ideas to the concepts of muscular Christianity, but substituting biological 'chivalry' for religious, Romanes demonstrates his agreement with the idea that the social manifestations of sex difference are rooted in evolution. In arguing that 'it is the privilege of strength to be tolerant', he implies that because men are stronger, they must inevitably use their strength in a chivalric manner (177). This, in Romanes' view, will allow men to reach their highest potential — strength sans brutality:

physical ability for both sexes is the result of gender construction allows her to reject Darwin's fundamental tenet that physical struggle is essential to gender relations and the development of the race.

'the highest type of manhood can only then be reached when the heart and mind have been so far purified from the dross of a brutal ancestry as genuinely to appreciate, to admire, and to reverence the greatness, the beauty, and the strength which have been made perfect in the weakness of womanhood' (177). By moving society away from the brute force which Darwin argued was responsible for the development of the race, Romanes redefines that force within gender construction, justifying both man's physical strength and woman's sheltered position. He claims that the expressions of a 'brutal ancestry' (in Caird's words) are no longer appropriate, and have been supplanted by the civilised relationships of modern men and women; however, Caird argues that the 'present possessive and barbaric sentiment' still exists and is codified within the ideology of separate spheres (MOM/I 5).

The approaches of Darwin, Romanes, Hughes, and Ruskin, when taken together, indicate a widespread belief based on biological, religious, and social grounds that men not only hold a greater physical strength than women, but that the possession of physical strength inherently grants the right to use it. The ramifications of allowing such a rule of force are, to Caird, not simply the restriction of women to their own 'sphere' of weakness, but a breakdown of civilised society. This situation places women in a position of permanent danger, for if physical force is used as a justification for the domination of men over women, and if men's only restriction on force is their own sense of chivalry, then by extension men could conceivably murder women if they choose to do so. John Stuart Mill noted in The Subjection of Women that the rules of both justice

¹²⁵ Women's lesser capacity for intellectual pursuits became a crucial element in the debate over women's higher education, particularly in relation to arguments that such mental work would damage her ability to

and Christianity were being undermined by the fact that ‘the right of the strong to power over the weak rules in the very heart of society’, thus creating a fundamentally contradictory system (561). Caird develops this theme by arguing that such an imbalance implies the potential to extend the concept of ‘separate spheres’ to a conclusion of wholesale massacre. She uses sarcasm to underline her rebuttal of what she sees as men’s dangerous ability to subdue women by force: ‘You have got to take whatever sphere we are pleased to give you, seeing that our muscles are superior to yours. You may be thankful, in fact, that you are allowed a sphere at all in this world, since we might easily wipe you off the face of it, if we felt so inclined’ (MOM/I 10). If men are given the authority to rule based solely on strength—rather than merit, intelligence, or wisdom—there are no checks (other than even greater strength) to the power they can wield. Approval to dominate and use violence thus becomes a license to destroy.

Allowing for dominance on the basis of physical strength not only opens the door to outright warfare within society, but would allow women to ‘annihilate all male infants if she chose, and so bring about, in a less direct manner, the same final result of extermination, only the other way round’ (MOM/I 11). This would also be logical, given that male violence against women offers the ‘perplexing complication’ that ‘woman must herself produce her own exterminators’; women might well conclude that bearing children is not worth the risk of being killed by them (MOM/I 11). All combinations provided by Caird lead not only to murder on the grounds of force, but to the extinction of the race through the destruction of one sex or the other. Subtly

become a mother; see, for instance, Eliza Lynn Linton, ‘The Higher Education of Women’ (1886).

reminding her readers of the integral connection between the sexes, Caird rejects the use of force on the most basic of grounds—that the race cannot continue without co-operation between the sexes. Allowing physical force to remain an acceptable method of interpersonal relationship would have catastrophic consequences.

Even if actual genocide is avoided, the use of ‘might makes right’ as justification for behaviour would cause, in Caird’s view, a civilised society to degenerate into lawlessness. Because control would be based on overpowering one’s enemies, those who had less physical strength than others would descend to the lower ranks of society, ensuring that eventually ‘All weakness qua weakness would be deprived of liberty’ (MOM/I 15). Even the ‘ideal marriage’ would become impossible, for equality could only be achieved if the partners balanced each other’s potential for force. In short, basing a society on the rule of force ‘implies a wholesale repudiation of all those principles of social rights and justice on which civilised [...] communities, are founded’ (MOM/I 16). Extending this to an international level encourages an even more cataclysmic result:

Supposing for a moment that we in England thought it fine and spirited—or, in any case, necessary—to knock our neighbour down if he displeased us, to run him through with a bayonet, bomb him from the air and blast him from the sea, where would be the authority of our Law Courts? Of course, there would soon be no Law Courts. (‘The Greater Community’ 4)

The use of force as the primary method of interaction, on any level, leads to the failure of rational interaction, which in turn is superseded by mindless violence. For Caird, the promotion of physical force as a necessary element of civilisation masks its destructive capacities, both on an individual level as well as within the social structures that

distinguish civilisation from savagery.¹²⁶

Caird's closest examination of the misuse of male violence towards women, and how this might lead to social rupture, is shown through Philip Dendraith in WOA. Caird contends that male dominance, encouraged by social and legal codes that encourage it, has no inherent 'chivalry'; there are no restrictions on men intentionally using brute force for dominance and terror. Although Caird does not explore in depth how Philip Dendraith comes to be 'accustomed for so long to absolute dominion', her novel shows the destructiveness of allowing this 'right' (II: 113). As discussed in the previous chapter, both Philip and his father take for granted that they have the right to kiss Viola in spite of her repulsion of them. Philip also feels he has the right to beat his horse; that Caird gives no context or rationalisation for his action gives his cruelty an even more dangerous air. Caird has clearly designed Philip with an integral streak of cruelty, noting that 'It was in his nature to despise men and women, and to rule them through their weakness for his own ends', but she also shows that Philip has social approval and family tradition to support his treatment of his wife and his animals as objects to be controlled as he pleases (I: 81). As examined in chapter 4, for instance, Viola's

¹²⁶ This issue plays a major role in Caird's support of women's suffrage. She argues that using physical strength as a justification for giving or withholding voting rights signifies that government itself has no meaning, for rule based on force would fail to uphold governance through justice and the rule of law: 'At present these very rigid forms of unnatural selection have not been adopted, men of inferior strength, invalids, and cripples being permitted to vote without question, nobody then pointing out that the "State ultimately rests on physical force." In fact the very existence of the civilized State implies that some factor other than physical force has taken the place of that primitive ultimatum. [...] It is precisely in order to defeat the tyranny of mere muscle that law and government exist at all. That, indeed, is what distinguishes the civilized from the frankly savage' ('Letter', 11 Aug. 1908). Caird notes that this rational excuse becomes even weaker when its inverse is also invoked as a reason to deny women the vote: 'Women are excluded, for instance, because they are weak, and Nature intends the strong to rule; they are excluded because they are strong, and have all the power they need through their personal influence' ('Political Enfranchisement' 281). By focusing on the way in which 'strength' is conveniently used to

complaint to her mother about the treatment of the horse, which she instinctively feels is a reason to break her engagement, is answered only with the belief that such violence is integral to men and must be accepted. The attitude held by Mrs. Sedley thus perpetuates the conviction that male violence is both natural and an integral part of society.

Caird centres two episodes in WOA around Philip's 'right' to exert physical dominance over women, using both of these incidents to demonstrate the widespread damage caused by allowing male violence. The first occurs when Viola, still a young girl, comes across Philip and his companions in a ruined building on the edge of a cliff. Philip's glee in tormenting Viola's beloved poodle, as well as his previous action of kissing her against her will, foreshadows his first act of imprisonment. Not only does he restrain Viola physically, but he also uses this as a means of emotional manipulation: "“Now, listen to me,” he said quietly, as he quelled the child's struggles with a clever movement; “it is of no use fighting, for I am stronger than you; but I don't want to make you stay here against your will; I want you to stay willingly, and to say that you forgive me, and that you like me very much”” (I: 92-93). The falsity of his claims that he respects her ability to give or withhold acquiescence and friendship is betrayed when he denies Viola's claim that she hates him, and subsequently refuses to let her go after she asks for release. As previously depicted, her wishes are considered less important by Philip than his desire to exercise his ability to dominate her. Because he can override her expressions of personal authority, he considers that has the right to do so. The conclusion of this episode emphasises the way in which Philip deliberately uses her

justify a particular area of prejudice against women. Caird exposes the illogic of basing any social disparities on such a reason.

gender training to satisfy his desire for retaining power over her:

“I know your mother teaches you to be forgiving, and that you will forgive. See, I am so sure of it that I open my arms and leave you at liberty.”

He released her, and waited with a smile to see what she would do. She stared at him in a dazed manner. His arguments had bewildered her; she felt that she had been trusted, and that it would be dishonourable to betray the trust; and yet—and yet the man had no right to interfere with her liberty. There was a vague sense that his seemingly generous confidence had something fraudulent in it, though it placed him in a becoming light.

[...] “It’s not fair,” was all she could say. However, Philip had so far gained his point that she did not take advantage of her freedom to leave her tormentor; she only shrank away as far as she could, and sat with her head pressed against the stonework of the window. (I: 94-95)

By using her training to confuse her ideas of what she knows is right and what she has been taught to believe is right, Philip affirms his socially-sanctioned dominance. Viola’s integral sense of self has been overlaid by the belief that a man who releases her from physical restraint is being generous, for he could continue to restrain her if he wanted. Caird indicates the degree to which Viola has absorbed her training by showing the girl as incapable of reclaiming her liberty even when it has been returned to her.

Reminiscent of her attempt to hide herself on the bottom of the carriage, Viola can do no more than try to make herself small and insignificant, so as to remove herself from any further attention. Her self—which knows that Philip is wrong—must be suppressed for her to remain within the social framework which endorses his physical dominance.

However, Viola’s later responses to Philip’s continued dominance indicate that the repression of self is not necessarily permanent, and that using violence against women will ultimately result in devastation for both parties. Caird offers a view of

womanhood resisting, albeit in vain, the entrenched beliefs of male privilege: 'a strong arm across the window barred the egress. She tried to push it away, but she might as well have tried to break down the Norman stonework against which the large well-formed hand was resting. She beat it angrily with her clenched fists' (I: 102). This defensive conduct accomplishes nothing, and brings mockery from Philip, who continues his act of restraint to demonstrate that her actions do nothing to prevent him: 'Relaxing the tension of the obnoxious arm, he placed it round the child, and drew her towards him, saying that he must give her a mixed kiss, combining the ideas of punishment and betrothal' (I: 102). He is therefore linking his physical dominance of her with her 'natural' role of accepting his kisses and becoming the passive object of his courtship (a situation which becomes literal later in the volume, when he makes clear his intention of marrying her even though he knows she does not want this).

What occurs next demonstrates Caird's beliefs that women are capable of their own acts of violence, if a woman's anger becomes great enough to override her social training. Caird argues here that the ultimate result of male force will bring about the man's own destruction. Philip assumes that he can predict Viola's response in this situation, just as he did when he knew that she would not strike back when he previously released her from captivity. He now believes that she will 'struggle away from his clutches', and under these circumstances, he recognises that he can ply his force as he likes in the knowledge that her resistance will continue to be ineffectual (I: 102). Because he categorises her as 'female', he assumes that her responses will be what he considers a typical female response, whereas in fact the strong-minded Viola Sedley is

capable of other actions. Philip therefore performs his acts of force while confidently perching on the edge of a window which opens onto a sheer drop down a cliff face.¹²⁷ However, Viola uses his complacency to gain a physical advantage over him: 'she flung herself wildly upon him with rage-begotten strength, and before he could recover from the shock, in his dangerous position, he had completely lost his balance', falling over the edge (I: 103). Through his physical dominance, Philip incites Viola's own act of violence, and fails to understand that Viola's action is the direct result of his own brutal approach.

This episode foreshadows their final meeting, in which Viola's anger turns murderous after she has suffered Philip's dominance throughout their marriage, including the sexual violence discussed in chapter 4. He, having intercepted her immediately prior to her escape from the house, begins by keeping 'her wrist between his fingers, which were closed upon it as a vice' (III: 192). Though he soon releases her, he takes up a position at the door 'so that she still remained his prisoner' (III: 193). The true depths of his ownership, however, are revealed in his smile 'of mockery, triumph, and conscious possession' (III: 193) and the plans he has already made for her future: 'I have secured the services of a most superior person, who will henceforth be always your cheerful and instructive companion. I hope sincerely that you will agree well with her, as the arrangement is permanent' (III: 193-94). His claim that he will incarcerate her with a companion for the rest of her life hints at the treatment of Bertha Rochester in

¹²⁷ He has been doing this throughout the scene; his arrogance is not limited to his domination of women, but shows his contempt for the laws of nature.

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847), but Viola's only 'madness'¹²⁸ is her realisation that she has no obligation to suffer abuse at the hands of any other person, even her lawful husband.¹²⁹ As quoted in the previous chapter, Philip's belief in his ownership of her allows him to refer indirectly to William Blackstone's claim that 'husband and wife are one' as a prelude to raping her. His physical force complements the conventional idea that her position as a wife is to be subordinate.

Philip's final dismissal of Viola's attempts to retain her liberty and autonomy sets the stage for her final act of defiance against his ownership. He demands that she hand over the knife ornament given to her by Harry Lancaster; Viola's refusal mirrors their previous encounter in which he believes he can predict her response, yet fails utterly: 'He bent yet closer, and said something in her ear in a whisper, with an insulting laugh. Then in an instant—a horrible instant of blinding passion—the steel had flashed through the air with a force born of the wildest fury—there was a cry, a curse, a groan, a backward stagger, and Philip lay at his wife's feet mortally wounded' (III: 201). There can be no question that Caird intends for the denouement of her novel to be the murder

¹²⁸ Caird uses the word 'mad' three times in two pages—twice putting the word in Viola's own dialogue—during a section when Philip deliberately and brutally kisses her against her will, enjoying her struggle and her hatred of him. The character's use of 'mad' indicates that Philip's actions are ripping apart her sense of identity: "'Oh! I could tear myself to pieces," she said wildly' (III: 197). Viola has, even from the earliest pages of the novel, felt a schism between her 'natural' identity and that which has been placed upon her by her mother's religious and social conformity; actual madness in her situation would be a legitimate response, indicating that extreme psychic pressure has caused the schism to become permanent.

¹²⁹ WOA, published in 1889, precedes the 1891 legal case Regina v. Jackson (popularly known as the Clitheroe case), in which Mrs. Jackson refused to comply with a court order to restore conjugal rights to her husband, whereupon he forced her to live in his house. The fact that Mr. Jackson set both his sister and a nurse in attendance on his wife provides strong parallels with Philip's retention of 'a most superior person' (III: 194). Although the Court of Appeal eventually ruled that Mr. Jackson had no right to imprison his wife, this came only after the Court of Queen's Bench upheld his actions, stating that a husband had 'a right to the custody of his wife' (qtd. in Shanley 180); such a decision indicates that Caird's portrayal of Philip Dendraith, while exaggerated for dramatic purposes, reflected contemporary

of Philip by Viola. Not only does she foreshadow the murder weapon,¹³⁰ but she refuses to make this scene repeat the earlier episode in which Viola confronts Philip about his abuse of the horse. In that instance, Harry intervenes, challenging Philip's right to use force by symbolically breaking his riding whip. Caird could easily have mirrored this setup in the final confrontation, allowing her heroine to escape the moral ramifications of violence by establishing a second conflict between Philip and Harry. This would have limited Viola's role to fretting in the corner while the men fought each other over her. Harry, a male using violence in an act of chivalry, would have been excused any act of murder—morally, if not legally—leaving Viola free from moral culpability, and able to marry her rescuer without guilt. By causing Viola to commit the murder herself, Caird shows the intensity of women's reactions to the dominance of men, indicating that 'natural' submission is not at all natural, but an enforcement of social requirements about the passivity of women. Moreover, she hints that the essence of violence—shocking and brutal—has been masked by social claims that violence is 'natural' when performed by men. Finally, she allows Viola to retain full responsibility for her action, demonstrating that women are as capable of men of experiencing the complete range of emotions and moral decisions.

Even this arguably justifiable use of violence rends the fabric of Viola's society.

social belief concerning a husband's rights and his legal position. For a discussion of the Clitheroe case, see Shanley 177-83.

¹³⁰ On their way home immediately after the wedding ceremony, Viola threatens to throw his gift, the family diamonds, out of the carriage window if Philip insists on her turning over the dagger to him. This is the occasion of her speech, quoted above, in which she accuses her husband of demanding that she 'surrender my personality' (II: 89). Surprisingly, given his dominance throughout the novel, Philip backs down, though his post-honeymoon abuse of Viola's cat may indicate that the period between their wedding and their return has involved retaliation.

By murdering her husband, Viola destroys the Dendraith line,¹³¹ shatters the opinion of those who respect her, and destroys any chance of happiness with her lover. On the personal, domestic, and social levels, Philip's 'right' to dominate his wife is ultimately destructive, bringing about not only his own death, but Viola's; the ending of the novel points to her suicide. She must throw herself into the sea in the knowledge that there is no longer any place for her in the social framework.

Caird's use of violence in WOA, while describing the relationship of two people, draws attention to the wider issue of how male violence is integrated into social interaction. The authority given to men by biological and social tenets of 'natural' male dominance leads not to a harmonious state in which the sexes hold complementary positions, but to abuse on one hand and suffering on the other. By highlighting violence as abnormal to the relations between the sexes, Caird can then analyse how and why it is considered 'natural' and offer suggestions on how to change this situation.

The gender construction of men and the creation of the New Man

Although Caird analysed the effects of male violence as early as 1889, only after the First World War did she focus on how men were taught that physical violence was their natural role. In TGW, Caird's portrayal of Grierson Elliot¹³² investigates the ways

¹³¹ Philip taunts her in the final scene with not having produced an heir, indicating her value solely as a breeder of his family (III: 194).

¹³² Grierson may be a revisioning of Caird's son Alister, whose military career she does not seem to have approved of. Alister followed the lead of other family members in joining the Kings' Own Scottish Borderers, being wounded and receiving the Military Cross in 1914; see R.A. Caird, A History of (or Notes Upon) Family of Caird (Scotland) From Very Early Times, 67. Apparently Caird gave her son poison in case he was captured by the enemy; see Heilmann, 'Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild Woman, New Woman, and Early Radical Feminist Critic of Marriage and Motherhood', 79-80. Finally, Grierson's

in which physical strength and the willingness to use it embodies the typical 'masculine' role. In contrast to a Philip Dendraith-type character, who believes that the role of the man is to dominate, the figure of Caird's New Man rejects the 'right' to dominance on any level.¹³³

Like many of the female characters discussed in the previous chapter, Grierson finds himself struggling against an allegedly immutable fate, one which requires him to adhere to the expected path of his gender. This role centres around physical strength—not only the ability to use it, but the desire to do so. As the first-born male, Grierson's existence as a member of the Elliot family depends on his willingness to become a soldier. His father has no qualms about clarifying this to those outside the family circle:

“Of course,” people used to say, “your son will follow the family profession.”

“If he wishes to remain a son of mine,” Mr. Elliot would reply. (2)

Grierson is not loved or respected for himself, but for his ability to match the qualities traditionally demanded of 'the eldest son'. His developing interest in science and desire to study at Cambridge are not allowed to supersede his family's demands that he attend Sandhurst and go into the army; his refusal to follow this path is interpreted by his relatives as a dereliction of his 'natural' duty. As with Hadria in DOD, whose family views her musical composition as a slighting of her responsibilities to them, Grierson struggles with his family's protestations against his desire to pursue scientific discovery. His attempts to move away from his pre-ordained role are forbidden on the grounds that

name hints at homage to George Eliot, who as Elaine Showalter notes 'was a powerful precursor' for women writers of the succeeding generation (introduction to Red Pottage, viii).

¹³³ The figure of the New Man was an integral part of New Woman fiction. In The Story of an African Farm (1883), Olive Schreiner introduces this figure with a play on words: 'The new man, Gregory Rose';

being a soldier is his duty to the family; as he later sardonically describes his situation to a friend, 'To the family as a sacred whole we profane units must be subordinated' (69). His existence as a 'unit' must conform to artificially-created parameters, or he risks exclusion from the family circle. The demands made by his relatives, who as discussed in chapter 3 'worshipped the Family though not its individual members, as a sort of archetypal Idea' (1), are compared by the author to a blind adherence to religious doctrine: 'He wished heartily he could defend his life and liberty (as he understood those terms) without offending so deeply their religious convictions, for that in truth was the nature of their worship' (248). Linking back to Christian ideals of the God-ordained dominance of men, Caird here incorporates the concept that the importance of the family is judged as taking precedence over the needs of the individual.

Caird contrasts Grierson with his younger brother Johnny, who is hailed from birth as a suitable representation of Elliot masculinity: 'His small fist—mailed, one might fancy—seemed to wield a miniature claymore; his cries had the ring of a spirited slogan' (7). Caird makes clear the role of social construction in the development of Johnny's character, and how the attitude of his family contribute towards his interest in war and violence: 'His delight in toy-guns and tin soldiers was marked. As however it had occurred to all the relations to present these manly playthings, perhaps this proof of martial taste was not by itself conclusive' (7). As Caird shows through her analysis of the construction of women, if certain attributes are encouraged and others suppressed, the results cannot be considered a 'natural' expression of the sex, even though they will

she thus overlays his mundane position as the man who has rented part of the farm with the expansive role of nursemaid he will play for the dying Lyndall—an act he performs disguised as a woman (139).

superficially appear so.

Violence, in Caird's view, is one of the 'chaos of greedy instincts' for which modern civilisation is merely a façade ('Evolution of Compassion' 637). She does not deny its existence, and makes clear that the fundamental difference between Johnny and Grierson and their approaches to violence do not reflect either their physical ability to commit violence nor their urges to do so. In fact, she emphasises that Grierson's 'physical attributes proclaimed him as capable of as much violence as any reasonable person—or Elliot—could desire. His fine proportions, swift sinewy movements, like those caught and fixed immortally on some Greek temple-frieze, suggested a career of action and of conflict' (1-2). In correlation, Grierson's instincts are fully attuned to the glories of violence. Responding to the stories of his uncle, a general, Grierson initially sees war as 'romantic, gallant, noble, appealing to the generous side of the boy's character as well as to the primitive instincts; the racial subsoil teeming with obscure, ancient impulses' (2). Grierson's 'primitive instincts' and the thrill which attracts him to violence are an integral part of his character.

What Grierson possesses in addition to those instincts, however, is the ability to analyse and rationally question his own responses to his predilection for violence, a skill which remains undeveloped in Johnny and the other Elliot men. Rather than uncritically accepting his patriotic urges towards 'the glory of our beloved country', Grierson considers his emotions impartially: 'While his young pulses thrilled to the beat of the drum and the tramp of men on the march, another part of his being remained critical of his own emotions' (2). This critical ability not only allows him to decide for himself

that violence is not an element he wishes to incorporate into his life, but also foreshadows his eventual decision to destroy his research rather than allow it to be used for war. Caird is therefore not denying the existence of natural instincts, but suggests instead that they reflect a less developed form of existence. As she notes in the introduction to The Morality of Marriage, an appeal to nature cannot be a justification in and of itself for a particular type of human behaviour, for “‘nature” indicates all sorts of things which civilised beings presume to ignore, and that if we followed her dictates, in all directions, we should return to our aboriginal caves in the rocks, and pick up a precarious subsistence by devouring such missionaries as a beneficent Providence might send for the replenishment of our stock-pot’ (MOM/I 6). Blindly following instincts for violence may be ‘natural’, but if encouraged, those instincts lead only back to savagery.

The Elliot emphasis on physical strength and soldiering is the core of the attempted construction of Grierson. Even as a youth, Grierson hates the stories of successful Elliot domination, based on ‘dark Scottish centuries of murder and blood-feuds; of relentless revenges setting ever again in motion the monotonous round of violence and counter-violence’ (1). As an adult, he recognises the futility of physical domination to achieve anything other than producing a cycle of destruction. After learning that his ailing father has been badly driven into debt (largely through Johnny’s profligacy), and that an aunt’s seeming generosity in offering to rescue ‘the honour of the house’ (254) is in fact an attempt to blackmail Grierson into compliance with ‘the immemorial custom of the eldest son going into the army’ (255), Grierson realises that his family’s entire existence has centred around the necessity of overpowering others:

‘In their heart of hearts how they worshipped successful cruelty even though it slayed them’ (258). This integral demand for brutality had previously distanced Grierson’s mother from the Elliots. She had been considered unsuitable to raise her son because she ‘was thought destructive of the Elliot temperament: the instinct to “dominate.” How vulgar it was!’, the adult Grierson concludes (257). Even though this same instinct is leading to Grierson’s own separation from the Elliot circle, his family members refuse to change their attitudes.

In support of their love of violence, the family lauds Johnny, who incarnates the ideal of dominance over others. He represents the supremacy of physical force over science, particularly that of destructive brutality over thoughtful creation. A story often told by the family concerns an episode during which ‘the iconoclastic child [...] had nearly overturned Professor Windle and his apparatus; an incident the proud family were never tired of relating’ (246). The episode underscores Caird’s fear that those who worship mindless violence are inherently antagonistic to science and discovery—that brutality may always destroy development. Caird’s use of Johnny as representative of this position is strengthened later in the novel when he intrudes upon a social event. Although the group had drawn ‘together with the alacrity of emancipated spirits, filling glasses and lighting cigarettes in the prospect of real conversation’, Johnny’s presence destroys their intellectual discourse: ‘As if Johnny’s entrance had broken some mental electric connection the party appeared to lose vitality, and after lingering flaccidly for a few minutes, began to disperse’ (223). His entrance into the group literally destroys their ability to create. Johnny goes on to explain that he is flouting his punishment of

being 'gated' at his Oxford college, a punishment which resulted from his idea to use force against another student: 'He and some fellows had swarmed up an improvised ladder one dark night and burnt the books and papers of a beastly swotting chap—a rank outsider—and they turned the hose on him,—to put out the fire, as they remarked. Really rather witty!' (224). Johnny's glee, coupled with his derision of the scholar, indicates Caird's belief that physical domination will always strive to overpower intellectualism and destroy its advances. The two ways of life followed by the Elliot brothers—creation and destruction—are inherently at odds. Society can only progress by changing its priorities, privileging discovery over violence.

Caird's New Man, who rationally understands the destructive nature of physical force and moves beyond his instincts towards violence, provides the key to future development. Like his female counterpart, the New Man must be freed from the gender construction which trains him to fulfil a limited role. The eugenic concept of 'type' surfaces here; the Elliot daughters are 'Elliot's for time and eternity, as true to type as a bee or a blue-bottle', whereas Grierson—as the novel's opening sentence declares—'was "no Elliot"' (1). According to Spencer's theories of social evolution cited in the first chapter, when 'the structures proper to the type have fully evolved there presently begins a slow decay', but Caird sees Grierson as the means of pushing past decay into a new form of development (Principles 146).

The attitude of Mrs. Elliot corresponds to Caird's belief that a mother should not influence her child's growth, but rather (like Leonore's mother in WNL) should allow them to grow up according to their integral nature. Grierson's 'poor eccentric mother',

who is considered by her husband as 'not fit to bring up a canary, let alone' the Elliot heir (5), later refuses to look after her second son in his infancy, on the grounds that she cannot bear to have 'a fine nature growing under one's hand' only to have it 'taken away in order to be filled with ideas that one hates' (10). The positive influence of Mrs. Elliot strongly affects Grierson's later decision to find a career that will allow him to create, rather than to destroy, while her abandonment of Johnny leaves him free to be trained by the rest of the family.¹³⁴

The New Man must also accept without reservation the equality of women, refusing in particular to accept the conventional 'wisdom' that women are less intelligent than men. As shown through Viola in WOA and Anna in POTG, this 'natural' result frequently occurs because women are provided with inferior education. Grierson does not, unlike Johnny, become a tyrant to his sisters and aunt, but he in his youth he does consider himself superior to women. His change in attitude towards Mrs. Windle (the wife of the professor) demonstrates how he grows out of socially-promoted ideas about the relative value of the sexes. Although, as a youth, Grierson is sceptical of his relatives' penchant for providing him with 'heroic biographies, which he suspected of being "improving" as well as intended to influence his choice of a profession' (16), the biographies nevertheless influence his opinion of women. In considering the marriage of the Windles, he asks with scorn: 'Whatever possessed him to marry her?

¹³⁴ It is not clear whether Caird is condemning Mrs. Elliot for abandoning her younger son on the grounds that her presence, no matter how brief, might have affected him, or whether his nature is inherently too directed towards violence to be altered by any influence to the contrary (which would challenge Caird's argument that giving Johnny martial toys plays a major role in turning him into a proto-soldier). The overall effect, however, is a sense that Grierson is more naturally susceptible to his mother's belief that destruction is wrong, and that her beliefs guide his attitude for the rest of his life.

But Grierson had observed, in reading the lives of great men, that their wives were always millstones round their noble necks' (23). This literature, as well as the opinion of the Professor himself—who, in considering 'women as trivial necessary agents in the great process of Evolution', believes in a biologically-rooted hierarchy in which women are fundamentally inferior to men—prompt Grierson to believe that Mrs. Windle is irredeemably stupid (26). Grierson goes so far as to announce to others that had he been her husband, 'he would have cheerfully committed' adultery in order to rid himself of her (27). Although Grierson is unable to 'understand how any man who himself cared for freedom should desire to deny it to others', intellectually arguing that John Stuart Mill's idea of liberty should be extended to women as well as men, Caird shows that he still needs to reach that understanding on an emotional level (26). To develop into a New Man, he must reject internalised social attitudes in favour of the belief that all people deserve respect.

Because Grierson has, as shown, the capability to analyse his attitudes rationally, he comes to realise that he has been 'a brute' (a potent choice of words) in dismissively treating Mrs. Windle as a lower class of being: 'His idea had been of course to defend the Professor; he had never given a thought to her' (27). Changing his attitude to accept Mrs. Windle's positive qualities and inherent value, rather than judging her against an artificial standard, brings immediate results: not only is it the beginning of deep affection between them, but 'Grierson's changed attitude towards Mrs. Windle seemed actually to have increased the lady's mental powers' (27). The Professor's scorn for her lack of intelligence and his general belief that women exist only in a narrow sphere has

itself restricted her development; in contrast, Grierson's respect for her as an equal provides her with the freedom to develop beyond that pre-ordained, artificial role. Grierson also realises that individuals have differing natural capabilities, and that just because Mrs. Windle lacks the skills held by the Professor does not mean she is inferior to him. Caird shows that a belief in 'different-but-equal' should mean this kind of respect for all variations of ability. To hold everyone to rigid artificial standards would be like accusing 'an accomplished dog of lack of agility because it did not behave under water with the easy grace of a salmon. He would like to see the salmon on dry land trying to sit up and beg!' (28).¹³⁵ Combining theories about 'growing according to one's own nature' with beliefs that lesser ability does not merit disrespect, Caird indicates that this acceptance of Mrs. Windle on her own terms benefits both parties and allows each to develop to a position where they are more aware of each others' strengths. Grierson's emotional development with regard to Mrs. Windle is one which Caird wants to see in society as a whole, and signifies that Grierson is consciously moving beyond his social construction.

Finally, Caird shows that the New Man must reject demands to incorporate violence into his life. Hunting represents the way Grierson is taught to treat those under his control, and shows how he declines this apparent proof of masculinity.¹³⁶ His family

¹³⁵ Caird's metaphor hints at a reworking of Dr. Johnson's 1763 dismissal of the preaching of a female Quaker: 'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprized to find it done at all' (Boswell 327).

¹³⁶ Leonore, Caird's first heroine, expounds on her dislike of hunting, citing the cruelty of harming animals for one's own amusement: 'I dislike the idea of taking pleasure out of the pain of what I always call a fellow-creature, [...]. If we really had to believe that animals are capable of suffering just as acutely as we should suffer in their place—well, you will laugh, but I don't think I should ever be happy again' (WNL I: 60, 61). Rather than allowing her physical superiority to place her above animals, Leonore acknowledges their connections, something Caird continues to emphasise in *TGW*. In fact, a sympathy for animals

‘used to present Grierson on his birthday with books on deer-stalking, big-game shooting and so forth’, using these gifts to support their attempts to train him to violence (16). In spite of these efforts, Grierson refuses to participate:

Not even otter-hunting would “fetch” him, in spite of its being a riverside sport. He declared it was fit for fiends, not men. [...] Grierson confessed to Rigby and the scandalized Jean that he hated to see things killed and mutilated. Poor Jean! No wonder she looked shocked. So unmanly!

Real manliness, Grierson mockingly suggested, delighted to hit something that couldn’t hit back, eh?’ (16).¹³⁷

Grierson’s rejection of hunting, seen by most of his family as a flaw, is in fact evidence of his higher development. The New Man refuses to cause suffering to others for the sake of his own enjoyment.

Grierson’s attitudes serve as a means for Caird to question society’s roles of masculinity, repudiating the idea that gender identity for men must conform to the violence lauded by society. This relates directly to the way in which men were ‘constructed’ for warfare. Other writers who focused on the causes and ramifications of war also chose to examine the drawbacks of shaping men into becoming better proto-soldiers. Richard Aldington, in *Death of a Hero* (1929), uses a similar combination of factors to indicate George Winterbourne’s inability to meet social demands for

indicates that Nora Seddon is the New Woman who will be Grierson’s ideal partner: ‘In a strange dreamy tone she told Grierson that, from childhood, she not only felt the closest kinship with them, but had, as it seemed, a clear memory, for an occasional moment, of having herself scuttered away into holes and crept under branches with other soft furry creatures; and when she watched the birds flitting among the green, the same intense familiarity haunted her, sometimes bringing the experience of wildest terror’ (339).

¹³⁷ In general, Caird rejects a Great Chain of Being-type hierarchy in which animals exist to be used by men, with their suffering considered integral to the results of this ‘natural’ order. For instance, Grierson adheres to a vegetarian diet. His landlady initially misunderstands his claim that ‘I am glad not to have to devour my fellow-creatures’ (194), believing that he has previously been a cannibal. She remains uncomfortable with his decision even when he clarifies himself, believing that ‘his conduct savoured of impiety, Providence having thoughtfully provided the animals for our use’ (195). Caird indicates that

'manliness'. After George returns home from a continental holiday where he became 'feverish' over great art, his mother decides that he is 'old enough to have a gun licence and learn to kill things' (78). His transformation from boy to man is contingent upon his ability to commit violence, a situation also reflected by his school's approach, which is that he should 'learn to kill and be a thoroughly manly fellow' —the latter being directly contingent upon the former (79). After gamely shooting several birds, George ends up winging one and has to strangle it to end its misery. The episode brings home the connection between praise of masculine violence and its awful realities: 'George wrung harder and convulsively — and the whole head came off in his hand. The shock was unspeakable. He left the wretched body, and hurried home shuddering. Never again, never, never again would he kill things. He oiled his gun dutifully, as he had been told to do, put it away, and never touched it again' (78). Aldington sets up a direct connection between artificially constructed masculinity and the ability to commit acts of violence. Both he and Caird go on to make explicit connections between the pressure to conform to 'masculinity' and the sacrifice integral to warfare (discussed in the next section).

After the New Man rejects the construction of masculinity based on violence, he must find alternatives to his 'natural' role. As with the New Woman, Caird implies that art and creation can be a useful means of discovering one's own identity. Throughout Caird's work, art represents the creative power that her characters wish to express but frequently have to repress or forego in order to fit themselves into their externally-

most people consider animals to be a distinctly lower rung on the evolutionary ladder, whereas Grierson and Nora see them as equals in their right to exist without needless pain.

mandated requirements (particularly Leonore in WNL and Hadria in DOD). With characters such as Oenone in OTW and Margaret in AROTM, Caird demonstrates that art offers the potential to allow independence, particularly from the need to marry for financial support, while for Julian in POTG, art becomes not only a means of self-support and foreign travel, but a way to free himself from the various professions suggested by his family, and their expectations of what he should become: ‘What a disappointment he had been to them all! Well, well, it could not be helped. One cannot live one’s life on other people’s motives. Not even a steam-engine can work with its neighbour’s steam’ (13). By the time Caird wrote TGW, however, she seems to have modified her thinking; in Alpin’s discussion of his ideal world, he concludes that ‘the whole world of art’ was merely one among ‘many other temptations, harmless and otherwise’ that stands in the way of freedom’s ultimate goal: the advancement of the race (148). Art does have a place in the evolved future; Grierson seeks ‘unlimited chances of cultivation’, which includes ‘gardens and music and books and art; delightful companionship—note that—and health of body and mind; [...] travel and study and friendship and adventure’ (97). However, art is only one element of the ultimate goal: ‘real, able-bodied freedom—our creative word made flesh’ (97).

Creation is the core of Caird’s revisioned society, and she promotes the use of rational thought to counter instinct and build a more advanced method of living. Grierson personifies this goal, for his ‘face inconsistently hinted at the constructive type of mind: the instinct to build up, protect, add to the range and uses of things. The common, primeval urge of the child and the savage to reverse these processes: to

unmake, scatter, pick to pieces, lay waste, seemed to be dominated by the opposite passion—to create’ (3). It is this ability to be constructive which marks him as a New Man, and this, combined with his freedom to create, means being able to pursue thoughts which break with all other opinions. This includes not only the general disdain of his family, but even the beliefs of his mentor, who would have considered Grierson’s line of thought as having been caused by his being ‘led away but a “crazy wind-bag”’ (74). Grierson’s scientific discovery¹³⁸ is a paean to the power of individual creation and its ability to change the world. His belief in the possibility of unlimited power was prompted through his natural development and his rejection of his expected gender role, and was pursued even when his closest friends expressed scepticism. Only Nora, his New Woman companion, provides him with the support necessary to succeed, and the proof that she is his ideal partner comes with her willingness to take his work seriously because of her own personal interest in it: ‘What a relief and joy to be able to talk to her about his secret and the problems that he saw ahead. [...] Not the shadow of a doubt crossed his mind as to whether she could be trusted’ (339). That he accomplishes such creation in spite of overwhelming odds is Caird’s most telling statement that New Men not only exist, but are capable of pushing the world forward.

Surviving violence: Caird’s final statement

Grierson’s intention as a New Man is to use his scientific discovery to free people from their mental prisons: ‘Their power would concentrate on other things:

¹³⁸ Caird does not specify the details of the discovery: its importance lies in its potential to free humanity or to destroy it through the production of unlimited power.

things of the mind and spirit and then—as you once put it—the lumbering wain Humanity might well be transformed into a racing greyhound!’ (85). After being released from their social boundaries—including artificial gender roles—they would then be uplifted to a higher life, ‘spacious, sun-steeped, full-blooded life that continually adds to itself, grows in scope, and therefore in understanding, in capacity for happiness and ability to bestow it’ (116). The crux of Grierson’s invention, however, moves beyond what people can accomplish within the current boundaries of existence, for his discovery will provide humanity with a perpetual energy source. Throughout his search, Grierson despairs of the traditional view which means that the human race is inexorably ‘slowly dying’: a colleague of his ‘explains that while energy can never be destroyed, it can and in fact does gradually escape into a condition which might be symbolized by a large but not unlimited supply of water ceaselessly rushing down into a still lake where all its movement, all its marvellous artistry would lie dormant for all eternity’ (212). Grierson, rejecting this idea, attempts to open up the future, to ‘stop the beastly old Danse Macabre’ (149); he can do so by harnessing a ‘gigantic Power [which] had existed presumably since the beginning of the universe. Was he going to release it for man’s service and change the face of the world?’ (150). Succeeding in his task will mean being able to release not only the energy of the universe, but the unlimited power of humanity: ‘when once the material chains are broken, we have the entry to the boundless Kingdom of the Mind; and after that—well, what’s to hinder liberated man from indefinite development? I see him soaring like Shelley’s skylark into the heavens!’ (97) Caird is providing her New Man with the potential to bring about the ultimate

freedom from restrictions—social, physical, and mental.

The drawback of this discovery is its alternate use. Grierson must face the real possibility that his act has created a force which has a potential for great destruction, compared with which gunpowder would be ‘like a child’s popgun’ (325). This forces him to make a choice between allowing humanity to evolve through this new creation, and cutting off that possibility to prevent humanity causing its own ruin: ‘As he stood there pondering over this opening up of new horizons and the problems of his own discovery, the street and everything present faded away and he seemed to stand in vision on a hill-top at the crossing of two roads each of which ran away into infinity: one leading to the glory of a golden dawn, the other—into pitch darkness’ (436). That second road is the path which will be taken by those who believe that only through struggle and violence can evolution occur. Grierson, as a New Man, has already rejected that road for himself and the future he wants to bring about:

‘In my new world of freedom there’ll be room for all tastes—except the tyrannical—what my family call the “dominating”; that won’t have a look in.’

‘How are you going to prevent it?’

‘It’ll prevent itself, its cause having disappeared.’

‘The struggle for life? But the instincts born of the struggle won’t have disappeared.’

‘Effects don’t survive their causes for ever, and new instincts would be born to oust them. You don’t imagine that human beings have come to the end of their tether, do you? We’ve got many a new instinct to create and many an old one to transmute—’ (96)

Caird is revisioning ‘natural’ instincts into changeable elements of the human race.

Struggle—an essential part of Darwinian arguments about evolution—here becomes an

element which can be left behind when evolution continues. Should humanity be willing to undergo social evolution, it will continue to adapt to circumstances, and the need for violence will be superseded as they adapt.

In arguing against the need for tyranny in his revised future, however, Grierson must work against those who claim 'that struggle (which means the intolerable suffering that you have been speaking of) is in the end beneficent', on the grounds that 'it weeds out all who can't stand the ordeal' (451). Darwinian theories of natural selection are still being used in the twentieth century (and thus remain relevant to Caird's work) as the basis for theories which suggest that evolution can only be accomplished through violence, and thus that war is necessary for development. A minor character in TGW claims that 'England was getting too beastly slack and comfortable; badly needed the wholesome discipline of war' (233-34). Caird most clearly represents this view through the character of Waldheim, a German who wants access to Grierson's discovery to give his own country a wartime advantage. Waldheim not only echoes the beliefs of Grierson's family that the unit should be subordinated to the whole, but is prepared 'to sacrifice [...] anything that gets in his way to the Fatherland' (444). One advantage of war would be to combine the necessary struggle for evolution with the ability to shed the weaker elements of society, sacrificing them for the benefit of the stronger. Ultimately, the sacrifice inherent in war can be seen as a eugenic method of ensuring that the most fit survive to continue and improve the race, while the weaker are weeded out.

Caird indicates through the conflict of Waldheim and Grierson the fundamental nature of their opposing opinions: they 'were pitted against one another in some fateful

half-conscious way; fighting, as it were, for the soul of the world; a duel to the death' (233). Caird offers a literal depiction of this in the fight between Waldheim and Grierson over the notebook which holds the discovery. Grierson fights well, 'partly through having held his rage in check at the beginning', implying that giving in to any instinct of violence is less useful than being able to make physical impulses serve one's intellectual ends (499). However, even this discipline cannot long hold out against overwhelming brute force: 'Waldheim's weight was telling. It was a question now of minutes. Nothing but luck or stratagem could avert incalculable disaster' (499). Caird's description of Waldheim in this fight is riddled with animalistic descriptions: he makes both 'a curious wild-beast sort of sound' and 'something between a growl and a snarl' (500), following them with 'a growl of fury' and 'a grunt of satisfaction' after he 'savagely' turns on Nora following her destruction of the notebook (501). In this case, although luck saves the notebook from falling into Waldheim's hands, the underlying imbalance between the two forces cannot be ignored, nor can the fundamentally savage roots of violence.

In Caird's view, the instinct for violence can be overridden by rationality and a refusal to encourage boys to associate brutality and cruelty with masculinity. However, because violence and alternatives to violence are naturally opposed, co-existence of these positions is impossible. The only way to eliminate violence is for the race to evolve beyond it entirely. This requires a rejection of the belief that struggle is beneficial, and instead the choice of an effective and non-violent method of preparing humanity for its evolution. For Caird, the war serves as a telling example of how

struggle led not to development but to widespread disaster, including the systematic destruction of the individual.

An avowed pacifist, Caird wrote several articles and letters to newspapers in the last years and aftermath of the First World War. She decried both the alleged benefits of war and the tendency of nations to perpetrate the same atrocities as its enemies.¹³⁹

Although she does not give any sustained attention to Grierson's war experience, TGW offers her closest examination of the demand of the individual to commit self-sacrifice for the greater good. The act of warfare becomes a specifically male sacrifice.¹⁴⁰ Her focus thus widened over the course of her career from the domestic circle and society of the local neighbourhood to the international stage and the future of humanity itself. While Grierson succeeds in breaking free from his gender restrictions, striving for his happiness as an individual is no longer paramount. Instead, he must decide whether he can provide potential happiness for the race, and to do so as an individual rather than through the collective physical sacrifice requested of him as a soldier.

In Caird's view, the construction of men as 'naturally' violent has the same type of effect as the construction of women as 'naturally' intended for motherhood—namely,

¹³⁹ See, for instance, 'The Greater Community' and 'After' (both 1918), and a 1917 letter to the Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser, in which she rejects reprisals against Germany on the grounds that 'an atrocity competition with Germany' would lead only to a deadly stalemate: 'Which of us is likely to win at that game? And how should we relish the blood-stained crown of victory if we did win it? Between us—the Germans and ourselves—we should achieve a very hell on earth, the flames spreading like a prairie fire over ever-widening areas of menace and misery' ('Letter', 30 June 1917).

¹⁴⁰ Women were expected to offer a double sacrifice during wartime: not only through their own work, but by offering their sons. Robert Graves, in Goodbye to All That (1929), reprints a published letter which summarises this ideal: 'Women are created for the purpose of giving life, and men to take it. Now we are giving it in a double sense. It's not likely we are going to fail Tommy' (190). Graham Dawson notes that the two gender roles complemented each other: 'Within nationalist discourse, martial masculinity was complemented by a vision of domestic femininity, at home with the children and requiring protection. The nation itself came to be conceived as a gendered entity' (2). Nicola Beaman's study of women's

that their highest possible goal is self-sacrifice of their individuality for the good of others. Grierson and his friends may be a collection of individuals, but during the war they become units for slaughter, summarised by Caird as 'his comrades killed, mutilated, crushed, buried alive' for the sake of patriotism (503).¹⁴¹ Richard Aldington, in Death of a Hero, explicitly reduces the individual into the collectivity of warfare by demonstrating his hero's futile attempts to communicate with his wife and mistress: 'They were gesticulating across an abyss. The women were still human beings; he was merely a unit, a murder-robot, a wisp of cannon-fodder. And he knew it. They didn't. But they felt the difference, felt it as a degradation in him, a sort of failure' (228). The better a soldier George Winterbourne becomes, losing his sensitivity to art and his standards of physical cleanliness in favour of the ability to dig trenches and follow orders, the more he loses the elements of himself which make him something more than merely a soldier which can be interchanged with any other.¹⁴²

Caird does not focus on Grierson's war experiences, but emphasises in the aftermath of his return that he has changed. Only Nora notices, sensing 'as if not quite the same man had come back as the one who went away in 1914' (506). While before the war, Grierson had devoted himself to his scientific researches, he comes to wish all such discovery could be entirely eliminated. Having seen the destruction which such

novels between 1914 and 1939 finds woman's sacrifice primarily in novels depicting war nurses, who required 'an almost saintly devotion needed for the daily handling of men's wounds' (22).

¹⁴¹ Ilana R. Bet-El's interpretation of 'the myth of the volunteer' indicates possible connections between the claim that men should be willing to sacrifice themselves for the nation, and the concepts of muscular Christianity: 'the British soldier in the Great War was a man who enlisted in a spirit of intense patriotism: a brave knight who took himself off on a crusade of chivalry and sacrifice; who fought for liberty and the innocent population of women left behind' (73).

discovery produces, he is no longer capable of seeing the beneficial side: 'He said he had had his lesson. He would if he could call a halt to all science before the peoples had driven one another to death and madness' (506). The Grierson who returns from the war sees all possible results of human endeavour as doomed: 'History was one monotonous record of frustrated hopes, desperate endeavours, all to be wiped out in recurrent, organized, and highly expensive mutual massacre' (512). In his revised view, no individual can possibly make a difference against the relentless fate punctuated by a repeated return to violence. The sacrifice he has been requested to make for the glory of his nation apparently has no more benefit or lasting effect than the destruction of his notebook.

Grierson's change of attitude is not merely the cynicism of an ex-soldier, but indicates that by being trained to be a 'unit' of war, he has come to believe that this cycle of destruction is all that humanity is ultimately capable of. Earlier in the novel, he decided to destroy his research because he concluded that even the most unselfish of humans cannot understand that universal suffering must be stopped, so that 'not even the noblest of our race was fit to wield such power' (492). Following his war experience, he gives up entirely on the possibility that humanity can ever advance beyond its recurring cycle of destruction, and argues that science is merely a means of bringing this about more quickly: 'the progress of science means the possibility of mutual extermination — that interesting flowering of the evolutionary process. I had a narrow escape, I may tell you, of providing the means of mutual extermination' (507). By shifting his ideas

¹⁴² This acknowledgement of the stripping-away of George's individuality marks the point in the novel where the sardonic and intrusive narratorial voice drops away, leaving George (and the reader) to become

entirely, to the point where he rejects the possibility of any further evolution, Grierson has lost all sense that humanity is capable even of ensuring its own survival. Violence has, in the ultimate sense, succeeded in destroying intellectualism.

Unsurprisingly, given her status as Caird's final New Woman, it is Nora who voices the thoughts which bring Grierson back to his recognition of the possibility of development, and consequently to his laboratory: 'nothing will convince me that men and women in collaboration will really be powerless to resist what people call the natural order of things. [...] I have an inward certainty that people need not submit—in fact it's surely a truism—to anything that depends on themselves; and that means, of course, their own natures' (510). Extrapolating her beliefs on the importance of the individual to the level of the race, Caird places full autonomy—life, development, and evolution—in the hands of humanity. In the same way that 'natural' feminine development and the desire for maternity is capable of being resisted through the freedom to develop according to one's inner nature, far-seeing people banding together can oppose the 'nature' of humanity as being dependent on struggle.

The way to proceed towards this goal, however, is to offer small steps towards advancement, 'lesser gifts which will help us all along, more slowly of course than you hoped, but none the less surely towards all that you foresaw of larger life and freedom' (513-14). Decades earlier, Caird had cautioned that the advances in marriage she argued for were not ones that could be immediately taken up; here she makes the same plea for human evolution, further advising that a single person cannot achieve that task alone: 'If the evil elements of "Nature" were ever to be conquered or transmuted, her secrets must

immersed in the gradual dehumanisation of war.

be progressively laid bare. And here he could at least lend a hand. He could do something towards the agonized world's release, though so pitifully little in comparison with his old dreams [...], to climb that steep path up the mountain out of the Wave's reach' (515). Caird's greater good must be composed of discrete individuals, rather than the interchangeable units demanded by war, each of whom can move progressively further forward and help pave the way for those who come after.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, Caird's view of evolution acknowledged that the end result could not be known, even envisioned, at the start of the period of change. It is therefore significant that the final image in her fiction is not of Grierson rediscovering the power he had destroyed, but an announcement that 'Grierson went up to the laboratory' (515). Caird felt that the most significant results of a period of change and evolution, such as the one Grierson experiences as the result of being sent to war, came through the act of human striving which brought about the resultant development. The world could encourage this pursuit by sparing its creative thinkers the destruction caused by mental or physical struggle, refusing to force them into artificial roles demanded by others of limited viewpoint.

The way to break down those artificial barriers, once and for all, is to encourage 'the great truth of the essential unity of all life, the mysterious relation of creature to creature' ('Evolution of Compassion' 636). The rights of animals, of women, of the individual, all must be upheld and understood. Eliminating the false differentiations between the sexes and the species, Caird argues, encouraging sympathy rather than the infliction of suffering, will not only produce 'a counterpoise to the impulse of

aggression' (638) but free humanity to discover 'the long laughter of the age which begins in cruelty and ends in love' (636). This sympathy, and this development, is the essence of her life's work: 'the secret of all progress, the meaning of evolution' (638).

Conclusion

In spite of the optimism with which Caird ends TGW, she may well have doubted whether her own attempts at releasing the ‘agonized world’ had helped pave the way for the evolution she sought. Even at the start of her career, she had no illusions about the fact that such world-changing results would be nearly impossible. In her first published article, which proposed a revised relationship between the sexes, she noted that ‘there is a whole world yet to explore in this direction, and it is more than probable that the future holds a discovery in the domain of spirit as great as that of Columbus in the domain of matter’ (‘Marriage’ 200). Throughout her novels, she depicted characters of both sexes exploring options which led them well beyond the limitations of society, striving for the potential to claim ‘man’s power to possess himself and therefore his destiny’ (TGW 512). Although Caird devoted attention to the ways in which society created obstacles for individuals who worked towards their personal destinies, she nearly always provided room for optimism and hope.

By the 1930s, however, Caird may well have believed that any potential changes in the ‘domain of spirit’ had stalled, even halted completely. Decades of appeals to logic had failed to convince right-minded people that women deserved the vote; it had taken a war to achieve this goal.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, the New Woman, held up in the *fin de siècle* as a figure of modernity, had dwindled to an anachronism. The issues with which the New Woman had become associated—working in the public sphere, voting, and participating in higher education, as well as more symbolic representations such as smoking cigarettes

and riding bicycles—had lost their shock value. These opportunities became commonplace as the roles available to women expanded; Cicely Hamilton noted that ‘the old line of division between men’s work and women’s was broken down during the war’, and while the post-war period saw a backlash against women who worked in jobs that men could have reclaimed, women had demonstrated their fitness to participate in the public sphere (36). In the words of a character in Radclyffe Hall’s The Unlit Lamp (1926), the New Woman became ‘a kind of pioneer that’s got left behind’ (qtd. in Heilmann, New Woman Fiction 194). Even more disturbingly, Caird’s depiction in *TGW* indicates that, like other writers of her generation, she foresaw further conflict with Germany. Not simply based on the need to vanquish an enemy, this future war would be rooted in the ‘chaos of greedy instincts’ for which modern civilisation was only a façade (‘Evolution of Compassion’ 637). Caird herself, with the bulk of her work rooted in the fin de siècle and based on a devotion to individual rights which wars were demolishing, could easily have felt herself and her ideas for the future ‘left behind’.

Certainly, as discussed in the introduction, this is the way in which she was treated by critical scholarship until very recently. However, investigating her ideas from a twenty-first-century perspective demonstrates that in many ways, Caird was extremely modern, even prophetic, in her viewpoint. She focused on issues which would come to be integral to feminism in particular and, more broadly, to western society. The question of whether women possess an integral, biologically-rooted ‘nature’ which directs them towards domesticity lies at the heart of much of the current rhetoric about working mothers and maternity leave. Similarly, the debate as to whether men alone should face

¹⁴³ Women over 30 were given the vote in 1918; in 1928, the voting age for women was lowered to 21.

the violence of war continues to be an essential issue in discussions about the modern makeup of the armed forces. It is this breadth of relevancy which allows Caird to be lifted up from the general mass of New Woman writers and to be differentiated from those who held narrower concerns about the position of women in the late nineteenth century. Works such as Mrs. W.K. Clifford's A Flash of Summer: The Story of a Simple Woman's Life (1895)¹⁴⁴ and Mrs. Burton Harrison's A Bachelor Maid (1895)¹⁴⁵ are rightly integrated into the 'canon' of New Woman fiction for their discussions of issues such as the problems faced by young women who marry in ignorance, and the higher education of women, but contain little which would make them suitable for deeper interpretation outwith that categorisation. Even though Caird may well have felt her personal attempts had borne no fruit during her lifetime, she correctly recognised that the future was to hold boundless developments in social advancement and personal relationships, and that the importance of the individual versus their adherence to collective ideals would become a significant element of twentieth-century politics.¹⁴⁶ For this reason alone, her dismissal as a 'problem novelist' is a facile summation of the depths of her work.

That her faith in the future was more than a rhetorical stance can be seen in Ernest Rhys' personal description of Caird in her final years. A rare personal account, and the only known portrayal of Caird after the death of her husband in 1921, Rhys' anecdote reflects the interest in spirituality which Caird developed in the twentieth

¹⁴⁴ Sophia Lucy Jane Clifford, 1846-1929. For biographical information, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 12: 102-03.

¹⁴⁵ Constance Cary Harrison, c. 1843-1920. For further information, see Gaillynn M. Bowman, Constance Cary Harrison, Refugitta of Richmond (2003).

century.¹⁴⁷ From a lifetime of upholding the importance and significance of the individual against the destructive forces of gender construction and collectivism, Caird faced her final years with the belief that persistence and faith could, indeed, achieve any task that she will set itself to accomplish:

She was, moreover, fighting a battle of her own against frail health and the oncoming of old age. She declared valiantly that there was no spiritual reason, and therefore no absolute physical reason, why one should grow old and die, and she defied the omens with superb courage, wit, and gaiety. Therefore she [...] implied that faith in the spiritual world could work wonders, and bring new powers into play. "Yes," she said once, laughing defiantly as she said it, "death is only a superstition, and I do not mean to die." It is so I still picture her, that brave dainty figure marching into the firelight in her long drawing-room or holding up a silver candlestick on the stairs as she parted from us at bedtime, as if she were going to light herself into the region where is no age or decay. (216-17)

While death has not quite been averted, the efforts of twentieth-century scientists have certainly accomplished great advancements in sustaining and extending life. It is tempting to think that if Caird were able to see the developments humanity has achieved in the seventy-four years since her death, she would approve.

¹⁴⁶ In *SOS*, Caird specifically challenges socialist ideals.

¹⁴⁷ For Caird's involvement in the theosophical movement, see Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies* 180-81.

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Breaking out of the Cage

Mona Caird and her Reception in the Victorian Press

PRIOR TO THE SUMMER of 1888, it is unlikely that anyone would have recognised the name of Mona Caird. She had published two novels under the pseudonym of G. Noel Hatton, *Whom Nature Leadeth* in 1883 and *One That Wins* in 1887; with the exception of a few reviews, they did not receive much attention. The first known piece published under Caird's own name, an essay with the simple title of 'Marriage', appeared in the August 1888 issue of the *Westminster Review*. Within six weeks, Mona Caird's opinions were being ferociously debated in the pages of the national press, not only by journalists but by the entire range of the Victorian middle class. Caird herself was simultaneously hailed as a pioneer and condemned for her unwomanly approach to the sacred institution of marriage. Only when the murders of Jack the Ripper claimed the public's attention in late September did the furore subside. Well into the twentieth century, the question 'Is Marriage a Failure?' remained a catch-phrase of the *fin-de-siècle's* obsession with the position of married women. Why should an article by an unknown writer have caused such an uproar?

An essay which upheld conservative attitudes towards marriage would not have caused a sensation; that Caird's approach to the topic was less than conventional is clear from the slant of the review which published it. John Chapman, who took over editorship of the *Westminster Review* in 1852 and maintained that position for a good forty years, was professionally and personally a model for radicalism. His magazine attracted the work of such notable thinkers as John Stuart Mill and T.H. Huxley – the latter dubbed it 'the wicked *Westminster*' – and some of his contributors accepted lesser payment than they would have received elsewhere, for the distinction of being published by him. Chapman is best known today for his personal life, a paean to sexual freedom which made

TRACEY S. ROSENBERG

'Victorian family values' are sometimes cited as emblematic of stable society. But in fact, in Victorian times, not everyone subscribed to the conventions of family structure and gender roles. Public figures often maintained a respectable front, while conducting themselves according to their preferred, very different lights in private. Among those who had the courage to speak out about the hypocrisies of her day was Mona Caird, whose radical views on marriage provoked a huge public controversy and triggered a feeding frenzy in the press.

him an important figure in the life of one of the greatest English novelists. In the early years of his editorship, he was conducting simultaneous relationships with three women under his own roof – his wife, his children's governess, and Marian Evans, who was later to gain fame as George Eliot.

Chapman's *Westminster Review* therefore seems an eminently suitable place for Caird to have published an essay attacking the foundations of marriage. Interestingly, however, her essay was included within the 'Independent Section', which was reserved for 'able Articles which, though harmonizing with the general spirit and aims of the *Review*, may contain opinions at variance with the particular ideas or measures it advocates'. Perhaps in the later years of his life, even such a libertine as Chapman did not wish to embrace Caird's views too closely. On the other hand, labelling certain articles in this manner might have been a ploy to draw even greater attention to them. If so, it succeeded; the issue in which 'Marriage' was printed was the first issue of the *Westminster* to sell out its entire print run.

Caird's articles do not read as though they are being written for mere shock value. In both 'Marriage' and 'Ideal Marriage' (published in the *Westminster* later the same year), she turned a keen eye and a well-read mind to the institution of marriage, and determined logically and sympathetically that for women, marriage was little better than socially-sanctioned enslavement. Drawing on the theories of John Stuart Mill, who pointed out that even female slaves had the right to refuse the sexual advances of their masters (which no married woman could legally do when approached by her husband), Caird traced the development of the modern system wherein a woman was trained to believe that marriage was her duty, and that she had no other alternative.

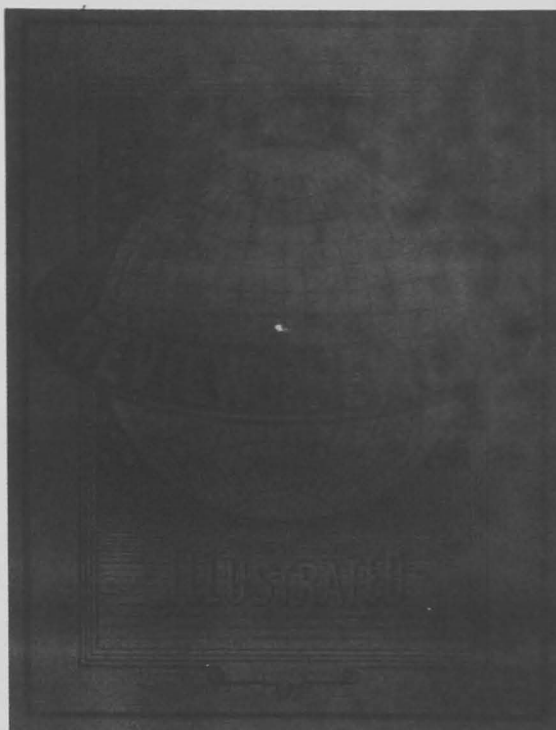


A portrait of Mona Caird, from the *Review of Reviews*, 1894. (Y.184 PER)

because women were taught that such restrictions reflected their natural character, women themselves came to believe that they had no purpose in life except to marry, bear children, and abnegate themselves for their families. Such a viewpoint not only restricted women to the domestic sphere, but also ensured that any variation from the 'natural' expression of female nature was treated as an aberration instead of an evolutionary development. As a result, Caird argued, modern women had largely adapted themselves to the nature of their cages – which was generally perceived as evidence that these cages were what suited women best!

According to Caird, such a system was not only a disaster for women, but for society as a whole. Instead of being a communion of two like-minded individuals, marriage became an uneasy partnership between unhappily-yoked victims. The woman, trained to serve the ideal of marriage, spent her life trying to keep her husband at home; he, in turn, found himself deprived of liberty in exchange for a dull existence. In this regard, modern marriage, for Caird, was indeed a 'vexatious failure'. The cure was freedom for both partners, a contract made between individuals without the interference of society or the state; the financial independence of women, so that they could marry if they like but not be required to sell themselves out of sheer necessity; and equal education of the sexes, allowing for individuality and self-expression for both men and women. Equal partnership and women's independence would ensure that marriage was *not* a failure.

There is not enough known about Caird's own marriage to judge whether her views were derived from personal experience, but it seems unlikely. Katherine Tynan, in her 1913 memoir *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, looked back on the 'Is Marriage a Failure?' sensation and suggested that Caird's anger was derived from a sense of social injustice rather than from a private grievance: 'I think she was dissatisfied with marriage vicariously: someone, a sister perhaps, had made an unfortunate marriage. Her own, I am sure, was happy enough.' It does seem that the Cairds had quite an advanced marriage in which each partner pursued their own career; for several months a year, Caird lived in London and travelled on the continent, while her husband (the author of a work on sheep farming in New Zealand) lived on their Galloway estate. Whatever her views on her own marriage, therefore,



Review of Reviews, 1894 (Y.184PER) carried a short article about Mona Caird.

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IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

EDITED
WITH A PREFACE

BY
HARRY QUILTER, M.A.
BARRISTER-AT-LAW

AND CONTAINING

THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTERS ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE *DAILY TELEGRAPH*, A PAPER ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARRIAGE BY MRS. LYNN LINTON, AND A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE PRINCIPAL LAWS OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTIAN WORLD BY H. A. SMITH, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

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PATERNOSTER SQUARE

[1888]

Such was the furore caused by Mona Caird's uncompromising critique of conventional social relations between the sexes, Harold Quilter made a selection of responses and published them in book form in 1888 as *Is Marriage a Failure?* (T.394.g)

Caird seems to have been a far cry from the 'angel in the house' who suffered the degradation of domestic bondage.

Whether the reputation of the *Westminster Review* had any influence on the *Daily Telegraph's* decision to trawl it

for copy is unknown. It does seem, though, that the newspaper had no particular foresight that this topic would result in such a dramatic response. The *Telegraph's* commentary on Caird's essay was one of several short pieces published on 8 August 1888; the newspaper, like many other publications, needed to fill space during the slow 'silly season' when Parliament was not in session. In this case it drew from a wide selection of contemporary issues. Its response to 'Marriage' does not even lead the page, but follows a piece on the acquittal of nineteen-year-old Sabina Tilley for the murder of her two infant children, and precedes commentary on declining attendance in the House of Commons and the third reading of the Parnell Commission Bill, which had been passed the previous day. The placement of Caird's views can therefore be seen as a recognition that the issue of marriage, like that of infanticide and political terrorism, was highly topical.

The *Telegraph's* response to 'Marriage' is notably dismissive, undercutting not only the convictions expressed but the author herself. Caird and her opinions are 'peculiar' and 'amusingly lofty', her style is marked by 'female irony', and her solution to the 'the extremely difficult and very ancient problem' of marriage is deemed to be light-hearted. Although the word 'degeneration' is not used (except in quoting Caird's own usage), the article implies that Caird's historical discussion is entirely backwards – her insistence that the position of women has become worse, not better, means that society is reversing its evolutionary steps. This is an unacceptable conclusion for the *Telegraph*, implying as it does that society is not becoming more civilised, but rather, reverting to barbarism. Reading between the lines, one might infer that the newspaper finds offence with the suggestion that the British empire might be sliding backwards rather than achieving the pinnacle of eminence, and that for women, such developments had been little better than a descent into the savagery which British civilisation was intended to conquer. This is substantiated by the suggestion that Caird's views would be more appropriately received 'in a more enterprising hemisphere' – in America, perhaps, such heresies would not endanger enlightened society.

British readers had much to say about this aspect of marriage, and many others; between 9 August and 29 September, the *Telegraph* attracted over 27,000 letters on the topic. By the end of 1888, Harry



MARRIAGE EVIDENTLY NOT A FAILURE.

Joan (to Darby, who is getting stout). "LET ME TIE IT FOR YOU, DARLING."

A Punch cartoon parodying *Is Marriage a Failure?*, 1888 (X.231-233).

Quilter had selected dozens of letters which he felt to be representative of the debate, and published them (along with several essays) in a book titled – unsurprisingly – *Is Marriage a Failure?* These included the heartfelt:

I am one of those who have most unhappily found marriage a most dismal failure. Married when only a girl, after a few years I am practically a widow, having been obliged, from my husband's brutality, to seek a separation. This was not until, through his brutality, I lost an eye, principally owing to the very merciful law which compelled me to live with a man until I was maimed for life.

Another, from 'A Maid with a Mind of her Own', humorously rebuts Caird's assertion that relations between the sexes are distorted by the fact that girls are conditioned to see themselves primarily as marriage material:

Mrs. Caird says about this – I have read the whole article right through to the end – 'there are equally absurd social prejudices which hamper a man's freedom by teaching girls and their friends to look for proposals, instead of regarding signs of interest and liking in a more wholesome spirit'. What is this 'more wholesome spirit' I should like to know? I have plenty of dear, good men friends – 'chums,' I might call them – and I know all about their little affairs, and no more expect a proposal from them than I expect to be a duchess – not that I wouldn't make a good duchess, if the duke was a really nice and honourable duke, with a taste for music and lawn tennis.

Providing a condensed overview of popular and cultural thought on the issue, the collection of views presented in *Is Marriage a Failure?* indicates that the specifics of Caird's opinions were quickly lost within the waves of public response. Many of the letters, as Quilter himself noted, looked at marriage through the narrow lens of the writer's own experience; poignant letters from a man

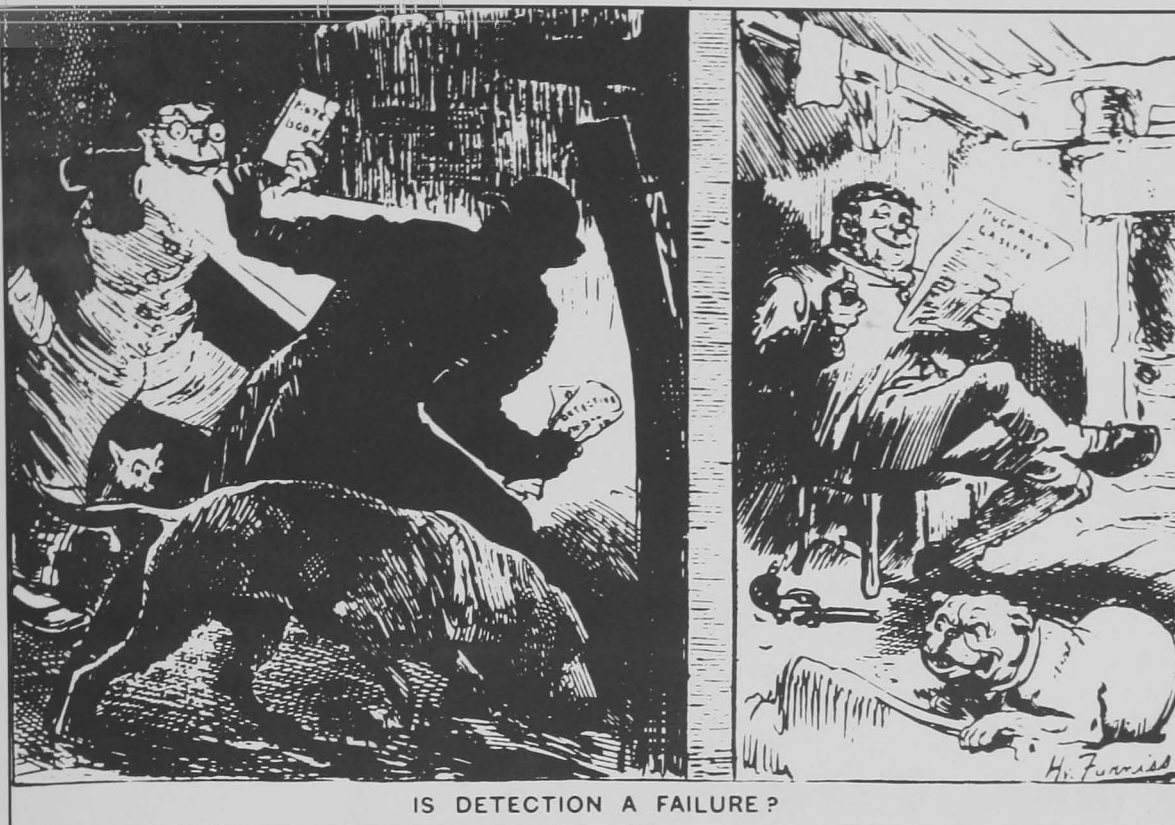
unable to divorce his incurably insane wife, and from a woman married to a habitual drunkard, indicate the despair faced by those who married in good faith but found themselves without recourse. Caird herself, in a response published in this book, accepted with no small degree of stoicism that although some letter-writers understood her ideas, others attacked straw men bearing her name:

At present, though I have myself received some hard blows, my views have really remained almost untouched. What I advocate is one thing; what most of the letters in your paper attack is quite another; and not merely is it not the same, but often is accurately the reverse. ... Most of the letters are written by people who have evidently not read the article.

Indeed, the majority of people may well have known only the opinions of the *Telegraph* and their fellow letter-writers. Clearly, the topic of marriage was both broad and volatile enough to accommodate theoretical recommendations for the good of society as well as specific arguments based on personal experience.

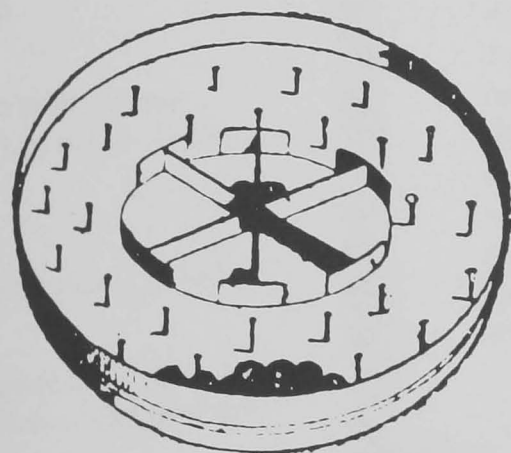
The question quickly spread to other sectors of the Victorian press. On 9 August, the *Pall Mall Gazette* presciently commented that the *Telegraph* was likely to have a few columns of letters for the next month, and suggested that it would be most helpful if correspondents would give specific examples of the good and bad sides of marriage, rather than commentary in the abstract. This did in fact occur, though both Quilter and Caird felt that such letters did little to address the fundamental issues.

The *Gazette* continued to follow the debate closely; not only did it fill its 'Occasional Notes' and literary column with tidbits about Caird and the various manifestations the debate was taking, but within a fortnight of the *Telegraph's* commentary, the *Gazette* ran an interview with her. This piece carefully establishes Caird's country home and her own persona as holding the utmost propriety; Caird herself is a 'bright and lively figure in sage green' who might easily pass for a 'mere society lady', were it not for her passionate arguments against the abuses and horrors of modern marriage. The *Gazette* is clearly riding the bandwagon, supplementing the original essay with a dialogue in which Caird's expression of her views are made even more forceful through being spoken in her own direct quotations. The *Gazette's* editor at this time was W.T. Stead, perhaps as much of a radical as Chapman, and certainly



IS DETECTION A FAILURE?

The Punch cartoon 'Is Detection a Failure', 1888 (X.231-233), takes a swipe at the failure to arrest the serial murderer, 'Jack the Ripper'. The full caption reads: *Is Detection a Failure? In the interests of the Gutter Gazette and of the Criminal Classes, the Sensational Interviewer dogs the Detective's footsteps, and throws the strong light of publicity on his work. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Detection should prove a failure.*



An *Is Marriage a Failure?* game, featured in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, September 1889 (CB.Wall.2/51-): the 'little world on which the question is solved is a shallow circular box in which the entire population consists of six married couples in the shape of six pairs of marbles ... these have their dwelling places in the centre of the game.' The couples trying to reach 'home' have to negotiate pins, representing 'the vices and allurements of life'.

willing to do much for the sake of good copy. Earlier in the decade, Stead had arranged to purchase a young woman in order to demonstrate the horrors of child prostitution, an act which earned him both journalistic fame and a jail sentence. Augmenting a public debate would have been among his tamer accomplishments.

A much different approach was taken by the anarchist journal *Freedom*, which referred to Caird only to note that many of her views were borrowed from the biologist and social thinker Karl Pearson. This journal criticised the *Daily Telegraph* for sanitising the letters column, and positioned the debate within the larger political context of the place of women in the (no doubt forthcoming) Social Revolution. Caird's article lacked socialism, but it was nevertheless 'the utterance of a woman's cry of revolt!'

Another periodical which viewed Caird even more clearly as the saviour of womanhood was the feminist *Shafts*, which described 'Marriage' and later essays as 'brilliant gems' which provide 'light enough to guide many wayfaring steps.' The slant of the publication reflected the manner in which the debate was treated, resulting in a wide variety of responses, but it was impossible to ignore the question which had so gripped the public attention.

As mentioned above, 'Is Marriage a Failure?' did not die with the end of the letters columns. The debate was taken up in America in the pages of *Cosmopolitan*, and reached as far as Australia. The issue spawned not only responses but merchandising; well into the twentieth century, humorous postcards were printed with the slogan. There were also

games, played with marbles or cards, and a themed pinball machine. Caird herself acknowledged that her future work would be affected by the outcry; her next novel, *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), was published less than a year after 'Marriage', and her preface addresses the expectation that the novel would be a fictional approach to the issues she had discussed in her essays. When she died in 1932, one of the foremost elements of her obituaries was the role she played within the women's movements of the 1880s and 1890s. Caird's use of the press to express her opinions not only brought her views into the public arena, but helped women of the middle classes articulate grievances that would be argued well into the next century.

Note on sources

For those wishing to research the writings of Alice Mona Caird (1854-1932), the National Library of Scotland has an extensive collection of her publications. Her first novel *Whom Nature Leadeth* (Vts.15.h.1-3), 1883, appeared under the pseudonym G. Noel Hatton. It was followed by *One that Wins: The story of a holiday in Italy* (Vts.19.c.3,4), 1887, 'by the author of *Whom Nature Leadeth*'. Of the books she wrote as Mona Caird, the Library has the following titles: *The Wing of Azrael* (Vts.15.g.1-3), 1889; *A Romance of the Moors* (Vts.20.b.5), 1891; *The Daughters of Danaus* (Vts.22.f.2), 1894; *The Pathway of the Gods* (Vts.23.i.3), 1898; and *The Great Wave* (T.207.e), 1931. A passionate opponent of vivisection, her *Sentimental View of Vivisection* (1895.28/9) appeared in 1895 and *Beyond the Pale. An appeal on behalf of the victims of vivisection* (M.11/2.h.[alpha]) in 1897. *Morality of Marriage, and other essays on the status and destiny of woman* (I.20.b), 1897, collects her polemical essays on the subject, while Harry Quilter's *Is Marriage a Failure?* (T.394.g), 1888, gathers together representative opinions from the debate. Mona Caird also wrote a travel book, *Romantic Cities of Provence*, illustrated from sketches by Joseph Pennell and Edward M. Synge (S.178.d), 1906. Katharine Tynan discusses Caird's views on marriage in *Twenty-five Years: Reminiscences* (S.169.d), 1913. The Library has only volume 2 number 10 of the feminist periodical, *Shafts* (6.14/19), December 1893. Full details of the Library's runs of *Freedom*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Westminster Review*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraph* are to be found in its catalogues, online at www.nls.uk.

A Challenge to Victorian Motherhood: Mona Caird and Gertrude Atherton

TRACEY S. ROSENBERG

ABSTRACT The article explores a previously unknown episode in the life of New Woman writer Mona Caird (1854-1932): an 1889 visit from American writer Gertrude Atherton (1857-1948). Although both Caird and Atherton actively supported women's emancipation and wrote novels which championed radical views, Atherton disliked Caird, an opinion primarily based on Caird's alleged neglect of her only child. Both women rejected the prevailing view of their time—also held by other New Woman writers that motherhood fulfilled a woman's personal need as well as her obligation to society. By examining the complex views of these women, this article demonstrates how two notorious late-Victorian figures carved out public careers while struggling to place themselves within codes of acceptable female identity.

When American writer Gertrude Atherton visited London in 1889, her introduction to Mona Caird might have been a historic meeting. After publishing two pseudonymous novels which attracted little attention, Caird shot to notoriety after the *Westminster Review* published her essay "Marriage" (1888), in which she argued that marriage was a patriarchal system which adapted primitive standards to modern society. The *Daily Telegraph*, seeking to enliven its pages during the "silly season" of late summer, used Caird's essay as an excuse to ask its readers, "Is Marriage a Failure?" The question seized public attention; until the Whitechapel murders claimed the media's focus six weeks later, the newspaper received more than 27,000 responses. *Punch*, in parodying the letters, determined that marriage was *not* a failure, given that the debate "contrives to fill two or three columns every day" and thus allowed the paper to maintain its circulation.[1] The American publication *Cosmopolitan* also took up the question.[2] A selection of the letters was published later that same year, the editor noting that with rare exceptions, the responses came entirely from the middle classes, "bounded by the barrister on one side and the well-to-do tradesman on the other".[3] The *Telegraph's* question led not only to a transatlantic debate among the bourgeoisie, but also to a backlash against the writer of the original essay; writer Annie S. Swan reflected in her 1934 memoir

that Caird "had thrown a flaming bomb into the camp of the thoroughly smug and respectable ranks" with the result that "she was banned and shunned like the plague in certain circles".[4] As a result of the debate, Caird was marked as a social radical who had no qualms in destabilising one of society's foundations.

Nor was Gertrude Atherton a stranger to controversy. While a young married woman in her native state of California, she wrote a thinly veiled account of a local scandal. This caused outrage among her social circle, though she cared about nothing except being the cause of sensation.[5] Her next work, an unpublished novel of around 300,000 words, contained a high degree of wish-fulfilment, as its heroine "was all I should have liked to be myself: the most fascinating and beautiful of women, widowed at an early age that she might go abroad and play a great role in European politics" (AoaN, p. 106). Atherton's ambition became unexpectedly possible at the sudden death of her husband. (He had originally been her mother's beau, and the marriage she made at the age of 17 seems more an act of rebellion than a love match.) Atherton chose to pursue a writing career, moving to New York and then to Paris. There she met the writer William Sharp, who thought highly of her novel *Hermia Suydam* (1889) and who, along with his wife Elizabeth, cultivated the acquaintance of many artists and writers, including W.B. Yeats and Walter Pater.[6] Atherton became part of their circle when William invited her to stay with him and his wife in London. After this visit, but before moving into her own lodgings, Atherton spent a few days with Caird, who had been friends with Elizabeth Sharp since before Caird's marriage in 1877.[7] The depth of their friendship can be seen from the fact that each dedicated a work of literature to the other; Elizabeth's homage describes Mona as "the most loyal and devoted advocate of the cause of women".[8]

In her memoir *Adventures of a Novelist*, Atherton describes Caird's house as lovely, and notes that the drawing room was done entirely in "primrose yellow – walls, furniture, carpet" (AoaN, p. 172). The colour scheme appears to have extended to the curtains.[9] An interview published the following year mentions that Caird's drawing room is "as unlike the majority of London drawing-rooms as it is possible to imagine", though does not specify the colour; it is possible that this refers to a later house.[10] Regardless, Caird's taste was clearly unusual, and her choice of yellow leads to interpretations of drama and aestheticism through associations with the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, and the *Yellow Book*. [11] Caird herself used the colour to investigate topical issues; her 1891 short story "The Yellow Drawing-Room" focuses on a woman whose refusal to conform to a traditional colour scheme is, according to Stephanie Forward, "a manifestation of [her] unpredictability and her refusal to submit to male domination".[12] This description can also be applied to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), which in the late twentieth century was to become an emblematic feminist fable. Gilman wrote this story a year before Caird published hers, indicating that neither writer had

been influenced by the other, but the conjunction highlights that the colour "best represented the art of the 1890s".[13]

Atherton, who herself unsuccessfully submitted a story to the *Yellow Book* (AoaN, p. 241), similarly used her fiction to challenge women's restrictive roles. In *A Whirl Asunder* (1895), the heroine "rides about the country in boy's clothes" and hides in the forest to witness a primal male-only rite, while the eponymous heroine of *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times* (1897) separates from her upper-class husband and supports herself as a journalist.[14] This latter novel bears a plot resemblance to Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), in which a woman leaves her husband and children in order to study as a composer in Paris.

Judging from these parallels, it would therefore have been highly appropriate if Caird and Atherton had found a mutual alliance when they met in 1889. However, in spite of Atherton's approval of Caird's colour scheme, her account of the visit is almost entirely negative. Atherton sums up her hostess as "rather too aware of her importance, and inclined to patronize Americans" (AoaN, p. 172), and dismisses her professionally as having "recently written a very bad novel" (AoaN, p. 171). Given the date of the visit, this must have been *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), a three-volume novel in which a young woman is pressured into marrying a brutal man; when he is about to force her into the role of the "madwoman in the attic", she murders him. It would be interesting to know the specific reasons behind Atherton's dislike of the novel; her own heroine Patience Sparhawk, in a work published less than a decade later, is strapped into the electric chair to be executed for the murder of her husband. Although she is proved innocent at the last minute, Patience is clearly capable of having committed the murder, with far less cause than Caird's abused heroine.

Caird's views on marriage were reactionary, as shown in her *Westminster Review* essay, but seem to have had no similarities with those of her fictional characters. Atherton claims in her memoir that Caird's husband, though "more companionable than" his wife, was fundamentally "a suppressed little man" whom a wag had once dubbed "No One Caird" (AoaN, p. 172). This view of James Alexander Henryson Caird as the weaker partner is supported by Irish writer Katharine Tynan, who in the same summer as Atherton's visit attended a garden party given by the Cairds. Tynan described Mr Caird as "a most unassertive person who was present at his wife's parties, but was unrecognised by nine out of ten people as their host".[15] Additionally, an anecdote later told within the Caird family "records that at a dinner party a guest once stated that while everybody was aware of what Mrs. Caird thought about marriage, Mr. Caird's views were sadly unknown. Significantly," notes Ann Heilmann, "his answer has not been handed down".[16] These intriguing pieces of information provide strong evidence that Mona's personality and opinions overshadowed those of her husband.

It is therefore no great leap to assume that her views on how to raise their child were dominant. This is supported by her essays, which promote the “unpopular” opinion that “the mother has a moral right to final authority over her children.”[17] Atherton’s memoir claims that five-year-old Alister Caird was, in fact, being raised in an unconventional manner based entirely on his mother’s views:

Mrs. Caird was proud of the fact that she had evolved out of her own inner consciousness a new way to bring up children; this solitary offspring of hers had never been cuddled, coddled, punished, crossed, admonished, or coerced by rules of any kind. He was to bring himself up and be one of her minor offerings to a benighted world. (AoaN, pp. 172-173)

With one exception – a reception Caird gave in Atherton’s honour, noted for Thomas Hardy’s obsession with San Francisco cable cars – an encounter with young Alister is the only incident Atherton cites from her “dull” visit. The episode centres around her trunk, which she had to open in the front hall. (She strongly implies that Caird did not properly organise her household, there being no one available to carry the trunk upstairs.) After bringing some essential items to her room, Atherton returned to the hall, where she found “a small boy sitting in the top tray among my hats! He stared at me stolidly when I told him to remove himself and settled back more comfortably, his elbow planted on my best hat” (AoaN, p. 173). Atherton’s response to the boy’s minor infraction is outrage and physical abuse:

There was no one else in the hall. I took him by the back of his neck, shook him soundly, and deposited him none too gently on the floor. “You cannot sit in my trunk, whatever you may do in your mother’s,” I said severely. “Now, understand that once for all.” (AoaN, p. 173)

Atherton indicates that she is well aware that her treatment of the boy merits chastisement; she fully expects him to “lift up his voice and howl” in response, thus “bringing to the scene an indignant mother, who would probably order me out of the house” (AoaN, p. 173). In fact, Alister reacts quite differently, which Atherton clearly considers to be Caird’s fault:

But he merely stared at me in awe-struck admiration for a moment, then he sprang nimbly to his feet, ran out into the garden, and returned with a handful of flowers which he held up to me with a pathetically eager expression on his dirty freckled face. Poor thing, I suppose it was the first human attention any one had ever shown him. (AoaN, p. 173)

Atherton’s condemnatory verdict is that Caird’s child-raising methods are so deficient that her son, when mistreated, instead of striking back or reacting as the injured party, clings to the person who has heeded him more than his own mother. She is also clearly aware that Caird is not playing the required role of

"indignant mother". Atherton concludes by describing how the boy subsequently devoted himself to her: "He dogged my footsteps until I left, insisted upon sitting beside me at table, once hid under my bed, and must have denuded the garden of flowers" (AoaN, p. 173). Atherton places herself as the superior maternal figure, whose rough treatment brings the boy greater happiness than Caird's ideologically-based neglect.

Unfortunately, Caird has left no direct response to Atherton's charges. None of her personal papers have come to light, and her known biography is so thin that this meagre account constitutes the entire contemporary view of her child-rearing beliefs. There is, however, some anecdotal corroboration in Heilmann's biographical investigations. According to the widow of one of Caird's grandsons, Caird "was not considered to be a good mother".[18] Heilmann notes that Alister's room at the family's Scottish estate was located in the guest wing, and recounts that before Alister fought in the First World War, Caird gave him a vial of poison, in case he were injured or taken prisoner by the enemy. Heilmann feels this action must have been misinterpreted, that what the "anti-militaristic" Caird had "intended as a last resort against horrific suffering, was interpreted as the ultimate gesture of cynical indifference".[19] Alister Caird's decision to join the King's Own Scottish Borderers can be traced to family tradition; his uncle Lindsay Henryson Caird became a major and wrote a series of lectures on the regiment's history, while Lindsay's son was killed in action in 1915. However, Alister's choice might also have been rooted in defiance of his mother.

The only known positive view of the mother-son relationship is shown in an 1890 *Women's Penny Paper* interview. Unfortunately, its suspiciously vague remarks about the "perfect sympathy which love only can establish" appear to be less of a description and more of a standard rhetorical line.[20] It is possible that this depiction was designed to bolster the article's proclaimed goal of setting straight the record about Caird, in light of the attacks on her after the publication of "Marriage". Promoting Caird as upholding the ideal of womanhood would have been one way to shield her from vituperative accusations.

Though solid biographical evidence is lacking, Caird's opinions on motherhood can be extrapolated from her writing. There are few children in her pre-1900 novels, except for younger versions of the heroines. More importantly, Caird does not use children as instruments of redemption or as the pinnacle of achievement for women's lives. This in itself marks her as distinct; many of her contemporaries believed that the Woman Question could only be answered through emancipation, yet held that motherhood was the core of a woman's identity. For these writers, only when maternity was embraced by forward-thinking women could society maintain the stability that fin-de-siècle decadence and degeneration threatened to unbalance. Examining the works of some of her contemporaries and comparing them with her own first novel

reveals the separation between Caird's views and those of other radical writers of the day.

Grant Allen's novel *The Woman Who Did* (1895) stems from his belief that (as Cynthia Eagle Russett terms it) "maternity defined womanhood" [21], a belief Allen preached as a "gospel of evolutionary rationalism derived from the work of [Charles] Darwin and Herbert Spencer".[22] Claiming in an 1889 essay that women had a "just aspiration for personal independence, for intellectual and moral development, ... and for a voice in the arrangement of [their] own affairs" [23], Allen nevertheless argued that only motherhood could "fulfil women's deepest natural urges and needs".[24] Free union, rather than marriage, would ensure that women maintained their independence – but such emancipation should be used to raise children. Allen's heroine knows that denying marriage while embracing "the eternal religion of maternity" [25] will result in social martyrdom; she is willing to suffer this "for women's sake".[26] A consummate New Woman, Girton-educated and able to support herself by writing, the heroine nevertheless emphasises the needs of others, particularly her daughter. When the girl turns out to be conventional, rejecting the ideals for which her mother suffered, the *Woman Who Did* commits suicide. This final act of self-sacrifice is made not simply in recognition that her beliefs are too advanced for the world as it exists, but to allow her daughter to perpetuate the legitimate social order.

Iota (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn), in *A Yellow Aster* (1894), produces what might be a textbook for advanced women who wish to give up emancipation for domesticity. Gwen Waring "has been cheated out of her womanhood by the rationalistic and scientific upbringing" provided by her intellectual parents, who consider children to be merely beings to conduct experiments on.[27] Like a fin-de-siècle Louisa Gradgrind, stuffed with facts and stripped of fantasy, Gwen reaches womanhood with a "hostile duality of body and mind".[28] She marries her husband without loving him, feeling "rotten at the core" and wholly degraded by the wedding service.[29] She is disgusted by both sexual relations and pregnancy, but her infant saves her from the fate of her mother, whose maternal instinct did not awaken until years later. Penny Boumelha notes that embracing maternity causes Gwen to lose her place as "the centre of consciousness" in the novel, as well as her ability for self-expression.[30] However, the rapturous conclusion – in which Gwen cries "I am a woman at last, a full, complete, proper woman, and it is magnificent" – signifies that such a loss is insignificant when compared with the fulfilment of motherhood.[31]

Another writer who utilised children as the means of female redemption, and did so in an overtly religious way, was Lucas Cleeve (Mrs Howard Kingscote) in her direct response to Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Wouldn't* (1895). The heroine refuses sexual relations but is eventually convinced that the only expiation for the sin of Eve is childbirth.[32] Her baby makes her realise

"that, in His infinite pity for the horrors of womanhood, God had provided a compensating joy, the exquisite, incomparable joy of maternity".[33] A more secular social theory is espoused in Méné Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1995). Here, the heroine selects her husband because she "wanted the father of [her] child to be a fine, strong, manly man, full of health and strength".[34] She does not love him, but her personal emotions are subsumed in favour of the production of healthy children. The man Gallia truly loves has a hereditary heart condition and thus is incompatible with her eugenic theories. Rather than accepting motherhood as an inevitable goal, Gallia embraces it "as a freely chosen and newly defined feminine role – that of the reinvigorator or saviour of the race".[35]

In all of these cases, motherhood is seen not simply as an achievement but as a necessity, both for the woman herself and for society. The opinion that society would benefit from the physical strength and mental far-sightedness of the New Woman was by no means universal, however. Anti-feminist social critics such as Eliza Lynn Linton felt that encouraging emancipation could only lead to "physiological changes that would adversely affect [women's] capacity to bear children".[36] Advanced education, for example, was seen as being "incompatible with the rigours of the menstrual cycle, and would use up the energy which should properly be conserved for reproduction".[37] Strenuous physical activity was also held to be harmful, but the greatest danger and tragedy was when "the intellectual maiden became a sterile matron".[38] Children were therefore an important issue in discussions of the New Woman and her future, but both sides of the debate agreed that motherhood was an essential element of late-Victorian womanhood.

Caird's first novel, *Whom Nature Leadeth* (1883), takes a pessimistic and much less socially oriented view. At the end of the novel, Leonore, a gifted painter, has two daughters and a son. The boy is noted for being "so much adored by his aunts, that he was becoming unbearable", and thus must "be kept out of the way" to avoid becoming completely spoiled – strongly implied to be the result of his gender.[39] (The novel was published the year before Alister's birth, so this is not a direct observation by Caird about her son.) The girls, meanwhile, are pitied by their mother, who fears that "for every taste and inclination that a woman possesses she has to suffer and hunger all her life" (WNL, vol. 3, p. 223). Leonore even claims that because of this suffering required of women, she sometimes hopes that her daughters "may never live to cross the threshold of womanhood" (WNL, vol. 3, p. 316). In spite of such thoughts, Leonore is far from being a "bad mother", and is portrayed as highly sensitive to the needs of her children.

By the end of the novel, however, Leonore is at the edge of despair. Not only is it impossible for her to continue her work as an artist, given her extensive domestic duties, but she cannot see that having brought children into the world and sacrificing herself for them has been beneficial in any way:

She had tried so hard for these five terrible years; she had given her best, sparing neither mind nor body, and she had done nothing after all but injure the mind and weaken the body. And whose gain would her loss serve to swell? No man's. Her failure was so much loss to humanity, to whom she had bequeathed, instead of succour, the burden of these human creatures, to be fed and clothed and taught, taking the bread from the lips of the needy and the starving. (WNL, vol. 3, p. 232)

No man's and no woman's.

Caird provides a dismal summary of a creative woman destroying herself physically and mentally, accomplishing nothing for herself personally, nor providing any gain for society, which only receives more people to be responsible for. (Caird was, in later life, a member of the Malthusian League.[40]) She depicts little joy about motherhood, and it is clear that Leonore would have been happier not to have had children at all. Although Caird, like Grant Allen, was influenced by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, she clearly diverges from him and from other writers of the time in her belief that maternity does *not* define womanhood.

Her attitudes are even more complex than this, however, and indicate that she had little concern with the protection of children, either physically or morally. One of her central tenets, displayed both in her novels and her essays, is that the use of force is wrong. She argues against "the assumption that woman is, by inherent nature, physically weaker than man, and that therefore she is bound to accept whatever position man may assign to her".[41] If this argument were taken to its logical conclusion, she notes, given that "women are so much stronger than children, the latter might be consigned to any 'sphere' that women might select" – women should have the right "to shut their infants up in bandboxes" or even to "exterminate children altogether if they pleased".[42] If the only criterion for power is physical strength, there is no reason not to condone infanticide. Caird herself does not argue for killing children, but it is important to note that infant mortality was a major issue throughout the nineteenth century, affecting all socio-economic classes.[43] In addition to deaths caused through ignorance (as, for example, through the overuse of opium-based drugs), children suffered abuse at the hands of nursemaids, step-parents, and "baby farmers". Infanticide became particularly noteworthy in the early 1860s [44], and in 1888, the year Caird's essay on marriage ignited such strong debates, there were no fewer than three sensational cases involving infant deaths, one of which led to a baby killer being hanged.[45] Legislation for a revised Infant Life Protection Bill was drafted in 1890, and debated until a new Act was passed in 1897.[46] Caird's writing against vivisection demonstrates that she had a clear understanding of "the degrading effects of legally enforced subordination and abuse".[47] Yet in nearly three dozen essays, many of which condemn vivisection and explode "might is right" arguments of male supremacy, none address children except as tangential elements to the

current system of marriage.[48] It is impossible for Caird to have been unaware that children were in as much need of protection as animals, but although she argues for the rights of daughters, who were all too frequently kept in crippling ignorance, children qua children are rarely seen or defended. She was far from alone in this prioritisation; Carol Lansbury, in her study of Edwardian vivisection, notes that "animals were protected long before children in England and the United States".[49] However, it is an important element of Caird's consideration of children that she sees them primarily as gendered objects of patriarchal oppression.

Caird also appears to have rejected the common belief that motherhood must include moral guidance, which would allow the child to become an orderly member of a well-regulated society. The connections between infant deaths and the morality of their mothers had been fiercely debated in the 1850s and 1860s, with the use of wet nurses coming increasingly under attack; during this period, motherhood itself "was evolving toward increasingly intimate and loving bonds between the mother and child".[50] The prevalence of advice manuals in the second half of the nineteenth century indicates that although middle-class mothers held full responsibility for the upbringing of their children, they were considered ignorant, if not deliberately culpable. Dr Lionel Weatherly expressed a common view when he wrote in 1882 that "in the large majority of cases, the child's future life with regard to health and consequent possibility of happiness, depends almost entirely upon the mother's watchfulness and care during the period of childhood".[51] Advice manuals were a means to simultaneously counsel and admonish mothers; in addition to instructions on diet and clothing, they emphasised the importance of inculcating good habits and morals in children. Self-control was one such; Dr Alice Ker advised that "we shall bestow a most valuable gift on any children for whom we are responsible if we can teach them this secret at an early age".[52] In many cases, "self-control" was a guarded phrase referring to masturbation, but it was important in a greater sense; Dr Henry Arthur Allbutt, whose explicit 1886 childbirth manual caused him to be struck off the medical register [53], later wrote a less controversial work in which he stated that if a child were "indulged in all its wishes and caprices", then the mother "is guilty of a double breach of duty" – not only is the child's health compromised, but "the moral forces of the mind" are similarly attenuated.[54] This emphasis on order and self-discipline in the nursery was the first step in ensuring that such attributes would extend into the adult world. They were "necessary for success in the public world of business and professions" that the boys would join, as well as for the girls' own motherhood, for they would then pass on such skills to their own children.[55] The perceived need for such manuals related not merely to the health of the individual children, but also to the health of society.

As shown in Atherton's account of her encounter with Alister, Caird deliberately refused to give her son boundaries or emotional support. Her first

novel appears to support this belief, as *Whom Nature Leadeth* offers a plot in which maternal abandonment is seen, if not as a wholly positive action, then at least as one which would not harm a child. The protagonist, Leonore, grew up believing that her mother was dead; the unhappy Italian woman had apparently succeeded in killing herself. In fact, she plotted her escape after growing depressed through isolation, homesickness, and her husband's neglect. In her decision to fake her death and return to Italy, she acted primarily to save herself, but Caird indicates that leaving her daughter behind was a better decision than forcing the girl to live in exiled poverty, and portrays the woman as noble rather than deficient. Moreover, this decision does not damage the young Leonore, whose only complaint in learning the truth is that her mother did not make herself known earlier.

The mother feels that in being raised by her nurse, Leonore "would be allowed to grow up according to her nature" (WNL, vol. 3, pp. 87-88). This belief of integral personality connects powerfully with Caird's views on her son's upbringing, pointing towards a conviction that a child's character should be allowed to develop naturally, rather than be forced into a mould decreed by society or tradition. In this, Caird echoes Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in his influential work *Emile* (1762) indicated that a child was not "some *tabula rasa* waiting only to be written on".[56] Caird understands the importance of heredity, as Leonore's nature is deemed as being "as nervous and passionate as" her mother's, and she also acknowledges that "the first impressionable years" are crucial ones in the life of a child (WNL, vol. 3, p. 87). However, Caird distinctly rejects the argument that a mother's duty and responsibility was to provide moral guidance and instil good social habits, incarnated in "the strict, hard, artificial training generally given to young English girls" (WNL, vol. 3, p. 88).

Mona Caird's method of raising her son does not appear to have prevented him from becoming a productive member of society. It is tempting to draw conclusions regarding his choice of a military career, which by its very nature demands discipline and a high degree of conformity, something he does not seem to have received as a boy. Yet if "benign neglect" is indeed an accurate portrayal of her mothering practices, it is clear that Caird went against the grain of her time. A woman of strong principles who believed that society's treatment of women was based on oppression, she appears to have consciously rejected the demand to "guarantee both morally perfect children and a morally desirable world".[57]

However, before unconditionally defining Caird as a woman who had little concern for her own child or any other, it is important to take a closer look at the woman who made such an accusation in the first place. There are strong indications that Atherton's account is not wholly objective. It is, for instance, an interesting mental slip that Atherton remembered the famous question not as "Is Marriage a Failure?" but as "Is Life Worth Living?" – thus distancing Caird from the feminist controversies Atherton herself was beginning

to court (AoaN, p. 171). (It is possible that Atherton is remembering a slightly later *Daily Telegraph* debate.) Atherton appears to have disliked sharing the spotlight with other women, especially those who followed the same paths she did; although she became friends with "newspaper women", in her writing she is overtly hostile to emancipated women writers. One example in her memoir involves a woman identified only as an "EMINENT FEMINIST" (AoaN, p. 210). The situation is eerily similar to that of Caird; both involve a male child (freckled and with a dirty face) effectively abandoned by a mother too concerned with her rhetorical stance to worry about her offspring. Atherton, again displaying a clear sense of superiority, expects the feminist at the door, but receives a surprise instead:

A freckled-faced grimy little boy in a man's hat stood there shuffling his feet. I asked what I could do for him and he muttered that he wanted to speak to his mother. His mother? Could it be ... I knew that my guest was – or had been – married, but no mention had been made of a child. I was soon enlightened. He was the son of the oracle – and she had turned him out to sleep in a sand lot! Being cold, hungry, and lonesome, he was seeking to improve his condition. (AoaN, pp. 210-211)

When the boy's mother learns of her son's presence, she "replied vaguely that she had left him somewhere, but in the press of work he had slipped her mind" (AoaN, p. 211). Atherton is again the good maternal figure who steps into the empty space left by the deficient natural mother.

Atherton's biographer, Emily Wortis Leider, claims that this feminist was Charlotte Perkins Gilman.[58] Leider gives no indication as to how she made her identification, and the evidence is far from conclusive, primarily because Gilman (who makes no reference to Atherton in her own memoir) had a daughter rather than a son. However, apart from the gender, the account does correlate. Gilman was publicly condemned for giving up her daughter Katharine, even though the girl was well raised by Gilman's ex-husband and his wife. Katharine herself, years later, said that when she lived with her mother, she was "happy, confident, and self-sufficient. She was not lonely".[59] However, her playground between the ages of four and nine was the freight yard, and in general she lived an unchaperoned and unattended existence: "[o]stensibly' she was living with her mother, but in reality she was 'turned loose' on the neighborhood", perpetually taking second place to her mother's health and career.[60]

It is entirely possible that Atherton elided events, for she is not a reliable narrator. Whether this was intentional is subject to debate; published in 1932, her memoir was a reconstruction from memory, as all of her papers were lost in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. Behind her dual condemnation of Caird and the "eminent feminist", however, Atherton is addressing serious issues

about maternity as experienced by late nineteenth-century women who did not accept the role of motherhood as central to their lives.

In discussing her own motherhood, Atherton provides accounts which are difficult to resolve with her disdain of the two feminists for their alleged neglect. She does not glorify herself; on the contrary, she defiantly revels in her anti-maternal stance and her blatant inability to recognise a child's needs. Atherton describes her son as a living doll, with which she was "much pleased", but notes with surprise that "after I had held it upside down I was not permitted to touch the heir of the ages" (AoaN, p. 75). She hates that the nurse lays the child down with his ears folded; it offends her vanity that her baby's ears will stick out. Her solution is to take a bottle of glue and stick his ears back, knowing that this will not be discovered until his evening bath, by which point "the good work would have been accomplished" and the nurse would be "so impressed by my solicitude that she would be more careful in future" (AoaN, p. 76). Needless to say, the results were not as she hoped; when the nurse discovered the glue, "she had, stupid woman, attempted to remove it with her fingers and skinned the poor infant. He screamed so that he ruptured himself" (AoaN, p. 76). Atherton's judgement is that "there was no justice in the world", for she fell from grace, and none of the blame was placed on the nurse (AoaN, p. 76). It is no wonder that her mother-in-law, fiercely protective of the baby, had hired a full-time nurse in the first place – though it is also possible that the incident was Atherton's attempt to gain some control over the upbringing of her child, even if it were limited to the position of his ears. Yet her complete absence of concern for her son's physical well-being implies that the act of giving birth had no effect on her emotional attentiveness.

In Atherton's memoir, the paragraph detailing the death of her son is clinical in its detachment:

Georgie died when he was six years old. Never robust, although well enough for a time, the wretched conditions on the grape farm had sapped his vitality, and diphtheria made short work of him. He was staying with Mrs. Atherton in San Francisco when he was stricken, and died a few days later. (AoaN, pp. 110-111)

After a paragraph about her husband's bad health, she concludes: "[o]therwise life went on its monotonous way" (AoaN, p. 111). Neither does she offer anything other than nonchalance when she discusses her decision to leave her daughter in California, so that she could pursue travel and writing. This is diametrically opposed to the parallel situation of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who, writing 30 years after the day she put Katharine on a train, had "to stop typing and cry as I tell about it".[61]

Writing from a late twentieth-century perspective, Sara Ruddick, in *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (1990), states that the heart of maternal thinking is the "universal need of human children" for "protective

care".[62] The most crucial demand is for basic survival, which does not require any emotional bond on the part of the caretaker: "To be committed to meeting children's demand for preservation does not require enthusiasm or even love; it simply means to see vulnerability and to respond to it with care rather than abuse, indifference, or flight." [63] (Modern child psychologists, it should be noted, seem unable to agree whether maternal love is a necessary requirement for healthy emotional development.[64]) In assuming the existence of maternal instincts, Ruddick provides an example of how such a presumption entirely denies an identity to mothers who do not consider their children of primary importance, nor their preservation "the central constitutive, invariant aim of maternal practice".[65] Ruddick makes brief reference to mothers of previous centuries who knowingly risked their infants' lives by sending them away to wet nurses, but her ahistorical viewpoint fails to discuss why, if her theories on maternal instinct are correct, these mothers should have consciously endangered their children. Nor does Ruddick offer any analysis about her statement that "A mother who callously endangers her child's well-being is simply not doing maternal work." [66] Such a mother, Ruddick offers as a parenthetical aside, is not necessarily "a bad person. She may sacrifice maternal work out of desperation or in a noble cause." [67] One might well ask, desperation for what? The alternative, "a noble cause", implies self-sacrifice transferred from the care of one person to the care of many – which, in essence, is the main point of Ruddick's book. Her interpretation of "maternal thinking" allows no possibility of a mother who, in disclaiming all maternal instinct, is not so much "sacrificing" the work of motherhood as selecting a more fulfilling alternative. Although Ruddick acknowledges that "'mother-love' is intermixed with hate, sorrow, impatience, resentment, and despair" [68], she has little place for mothers like Caird or Atherton.

On the other hand, Mary Poovey, in her socially and historically contextualised work on the multifaceted gender roles of mid-Victorian women, cites the "ideological equation ... that morality and class stability will follow the expression of maternal instinct".[69] Exploring this idea within an examination of governesses in the mid-century period, Poovey argues that the figure of the governess was problematic because she was intended to be a "barrier against the erosion of middle-class assumptions and values" yet instead became a threat to those values.[70] She took over a mother's duties and was expected to provide the children in her care with the same moral guidance and gentility as their mother would have; however, the governess (herself required to be from the middle class) did so for money, rather than "as an expression of a love that was generous, non-competitive, and guaranteed by the natural force of maternal 'instinct'".[71] This was feared to be causing damage to multiple generations of women; an anonymous writer in *Fraser's Magazine* claimed in 1844 that "women whose lesson of life has been learned at mothers' knees, over infant's cradles, will be more earnest and genuine than those taught by a stranger, however well

qualified".[72] Just as women who sent their infants to wet nurses were accused of "losing their natural instincts through the effects of their physical and moral conditions" [73], women who failed to "obey their highest calling" of mothering their children would cause their daughters to lose maternal instincts entirely.[74]

Maternal instinct became a critical element in discussions of gender differences, especially in the 40 years following the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859). (Darwin himself believed that maternal instincts "lead women to show 'greater tenderness and less selfishness'".[75]) Herbert Spencer, a biological and sociological writer, was one of the major thinkers of the time, in spite of the fact that his "attempt to derive social theory from physics and biology" was made without his grasping "the biological concepts with which to go about his work".[76] Spencer believed that instinct towards the care of offspring is possessed by both genders, but "[t]hat the particular form ... which responds to infantine helplessness is more dominant in women than in men, cannot be questioned".[77] (This makes even more intriguing Caird's citation of Spencer as having a major impact on her thought. She was far from alone in this – the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that Spencer's "influence in the latter half of the nineteenth century was immense" – but Caird clearly used his ideas to react to, rather than to build on.[78]) In 1891, a lengthy Darwin- and Spencer-oriented discussion on pathological and physiological differences between male and female nervous systems led one doctor to argue that sexual selection in women led to "[h]er chief mental characteristic, that round which her whole mental being centres, viz., the maternal instinct".[79] Darwinism "was suffering a decline in the estimation of biologists" by the time Patrick Geddes & J. Arthur Thomson wrote *The Evolution of Sex* (1889), in which "they dismissed sexual selection as a teleological notion" [80], and their interpretation of maternal instinct is grounded in a more pragmatic physical foundation. A lactating female animal who no longer has her own offspring will "adopt" other nursing animals so as to relieve the physical pressure, "yet we soon see these established in her affections".[81] The conclusion is that it is impossible to consider "even maternal care as altogether disinterested".[82] The end of the section states that, for mammals, "parental care is general, and unquestionably grows into love for offspring".[83] Although for Geddes & Thomson the burden is not necessarily placed entirely on the mother, maternal instinct as seen in the late-Victorian era is one of many "sex roles [that] were interpreted according to the accepted roles of contemporary social convention".[84] Atherton appears to have internalised these views even as she herself consciously rejected them.

Elisabeth Badinter's work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France offers a radical theoretical view of maternal instinct. Badinter claims that this "instinct" is in fact "a socially conditioned 'sentiment' that varies widely with the mores of different epochs".[85] Her argument has stunning implications for the

high rates of Victorian infant mortality; according to Badinter, it "was not so much because children died like flies that mothers showed so little interest in them, but rather because the mothers showed so little interest that the children died in such great numbers".[86] Between 1760 and 1830, the fundamental view of childhood changed from "a brutal indifference toward the welfare of infants" to "the most solidly institutionalized concern for offspring yet witnessed in the Christian era".[87] Yet in order to bring about a deep and lasting alteration, the attitudes of the mothers themselves had to change. As discussed earlier, advice manuals became crucial tools in this construction of motherhood; numerous manuals of the early Victorian era testify to the efforts made to convince mothers of the moral and emotional commitment owed to children.[88] In general, motherhood became increasingly more of a social concern as the century progressed, becoming "defined as a skill that had to be learned, rather than behaviour that could be acquired" and thus being handed over to experts in morality and health (clergymen and doctors) as well as to women whose experience was stable and weighty enough to justify being distributed to others.[89] Society was taking greater responsibility for the treatment of children. Yet, although advice manuals provided new mothers with the necessary skills, at the same time those mothers were taught that they *must* love their children and that their own innate nature proved that this was their ideal feminine role.

Caird rejected this conclusion. In her 1890 essay "The Morality of Marriage", she argues that being a parent in no way ensures a person is the best suited for bringing up a child. This can only be accomplished by "those who have a natural gift for the work" – instinct by another name, but not something possessed by every mother. Moreover, this "natural gift" is insufficient by itself, and must be supplemented by a thorough grounding in moral and intellectual beliefs, as well as the more practical tenets of good hygiene.[90] Caird wanted to abolish the belief "that the mother should always take charge of her child, or rather, that she should not allow one more competent than herself to do so".[91] Competency in raising a child may require an instinct for nurturance and care, but this instinct is not restricted to a child's biological mother. Caird expresses similar views in *Whom Nature Leadeth*; Leonore, seeking absolution to give up her creativity because it is impossible to meet the needs of both art and domesticity, is instead advised (by a character who clearly represents Caird's ideal masculine figure) to embrace art and abandon domesticity entirely. Leonore should not only allow her servants to run the household, but should also "leave the management of [her] children's dress, education, and daily life in the hands of some refined, well-educated lady, who knows and will carry out [her] views" (WNL, vol. 3, p. 320). This is effectively what Leonore's own mother had done, with beneficial results. Caird clearly believes that severing the physical act of reproduction from "maternal instinct" is the most suitable solution for the children as well as their mothers.

Jill Matus, focusing on biomedical discourse of the 1850s and 1860s, notes "that debates about nursing and motherhood peak at what is also a moment of increased feminist activity" and movements towards independence.[92] Matus's conclusion could be extended to the fin de siècle; according to Lyn Pykett's comparative study of mid-century sensation fiction and late-century New Woman writing, the genres similarly "challenged the dominant definitions of 'woman' and her prescribed social and familial roles, and both generated critical controversies which became a focus for broader socio-cultural anxieties, particularly for contemporary anxieties about gender".[93] Maternity was one of these issues, combining as it did scientific and medical discourse with ideological theories of female nature and morality; the "cultural assumptions about gender" embedded in arguments about motherhood underscored "attempts to define and prescribe social relations".[94] New Woman writers and critics, on the other hand, "registered and reacted to the unfixing of gender categories which accompanied the challenges of reformers and feminists" throughout the Victorian era.[95]

That Atherton had great anxiety about "unfixing" her position as a woman, particularly as a mother, can be seen in her condemnation of other women who behaved similarly, whether through deliberate physical "abandonment" of a child, in the case of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, or perceived emotional deprivation, as appears to have occurred with Mona Caird. Both Atherton and Caird attempted to replace the supremacy of motherhood in a woman's life with the more individualist goal of writing (each woman wrote steadily for several decades). Caird worked extensively within the anti-vivisection movement and supported the suffrage movement for many years, approaching these goals from the standpoint of personal integrity and an abhorrence for the use of force by one party to dominate another. Arguments that woman's "nature" prepared her only for a life of domesticity and nurturance, that her main role was to act as moral guidance counsellor to the next generation, and that she was ultimately "defined ... in terms of a sexual function" [96] were rejected in favour of becoming a "seeker after truth, personal fulfilment and a measure of social and sexual equality with men".[97] Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that although the two women might well have been able to provide support for each other, Atherton was unable to see Caird as anything other than the "bad" mother that she undoubtedly feared she herself was.

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Notes

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- [2] Patricia Marks (1990) *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky), p. 51.
- [3] Harry Quilter (Ed.) (1984) *Is Marriage a Failure?* (New York and London: Garland), p. 6.
- [4] Annie S. Swan (1934) *My Life* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson), p. 71, quoted by Stephanie Forward (2000) A Study in Yellow: Mona Caird's "The Yellow Drawing-Room", *Women's Writing*, 7(2), pp. 295-307 (p. 296).
- [5] Gertrude Atherton (1932) *Adventures of a Novelist* (London: Jonathan Cape), p. 102. Further references will be identified in the text as AoAN.
- [6] Elizabeth Sharp (1910) *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod): A Memoir* (London: William Heinemann), pp. 140-141.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- [8] Elizabeth Sharp (1891) *Women Poets of the Victorian Era* (London: Walter Scott), n.p.
- [9] Katherine Lyon Mix (1960) *A Study in Yellow: The "Yellow Book" and Its Contributors* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press), p. 2, quoted in Forward, A Study in Yellow, p. 300.
- [10] Interview: Mrs. Mona Caird, *Women's Penny Paper*, 28 June 1890, pp. 421-422 (p. 421).
- [11] Mix, *A Study in Yellow*, pp. 2-3.
- [12] Forward, A Study in Yellow, p. 300.
- [13] *Ibid.*
- [14] Gertrude Atherton (1895) *A Whirl Asunder* (London, Paris and Melbourne: Cassell & Co.), p. 15.
- [15] Katharine Tynan (1913) *Twenty-five Years: Reminiscences* (New York: Kevin-Adair), p. 300.
- [16] Ann Heilmann (1996) Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild Woman, New Woman, and Early Radical Feminist Critic of Marriage and Motherhood, *Women's History Review*, 5, pp. 67-95 (pp. 91-92).
- [17] Mona Caird (1897) The Morality of Marriage, in Mona Caird, *The Morality of Marriage and other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman* (London: George Redway), pp. 131-156 (p. 152).
- [18] Heilmann, Mona Caird, p. 79.
- [19] *Ibid.*
- [20] Interview: Mrs. Mona Caird, p. 421.
- [21] Cynthia Eagle Russett (1989) *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 43.

- [22] Sarah Wintle (1995) Introduction, in Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 1-18 (p. 5).
- [23] Quoted in Wintle, Introduction, *The Woman Who Did*, p. 9.
- [24] Ibid.
- [25] Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 137.
- [26] Ibid., p. 42.
- [27] Penny Boumelha (1982) *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (Brighton: Harvester Press), p. 86.
- [28] Ibid.
- [29] Iota (1894) *A Yellow Aster*, 6th edn (London: Hutchinson & Co.), vol. 2, p. 64.
- [30] Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women*, pp. 87-88.
- [31] Iota, *A Yellow Aster*, vol. 3, p. 172.
- [32] Lucas Cleeve (1895) *The Woman Who Wouldn't*, 2nd edn (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co.), p. 215.
- [33] Ibid., p. 225.
- [34] Mènie Muriel Dowie (1995) *Gallia* (London: Everyman), p. 192.
- [35] Lyn Pykett (1992) *The Improper Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge), p. 149.
- [36] Carol Bauer & Lawrence Ritt (1979) *Free and Ennobled: Source Readings in the Development of Victorian Feminism* (Oxford and New York: Pergamon), p. 238.
- [37] Pykett, *The Improper Feminine*, p. 14.
- [38] Russett, *Sexual Science*, p. 118.
- [39] Mona Caird (1883) *Whom Nature Leadeth* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.), vol. 3, p. 215. Further references will be identified in the text as WNL.
- [40] Lucy Bland (1995) *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality 1885-1914* (London and New York: Penguin), p. 215.
- [41] Mona Caird (1897) Introduction, *The Morality of Marriage*, pp. 1-17 (p. 9).
- [42] Ibid., p. 16.
- [43] Patricia Branca (1975) *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London: Croom Helm), p. 98.
- [44] Carol Smart (1992) Disruptive Bodies and Unruly Sex, in Carol Smart (Ed.) *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 16.
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- [46] Ibid., p. 161.
- [47] Florence S. Boos (1998) A History of Their Own: Mona Caird, Frances Swiney, and Fin De Siècle Feminist Family History, in Jeffrey Cox & Shelton Stromquist (Eds) *Contesting the Master Narrative: Essays in Social History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press), pp. 69-92 (p. 85).

- [48] Because there is no comprehensive bibliography of Caird's essays, it is impossible to say definitively that she never wrote on children. However, none of her known essays address this issue.
- [49] Carol Lansbury (1985) *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), p. 29.
- [50] Branca, *Silent Sisterhood*, p. 102.
- [51] Lionel Weatherly (1882) *The Young Wife's Own Book: A Manual of Personal and Family Hygiene* (London: Griffith & Farran; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.), p. 112.
- [52] Alice Ker (1891) *Motherhood: A Book for Every Woman* (London: John Heywood), pp. 101-102.
- [53] Ronald Pearsall (1976) *Public Purity, Private Shame: Victorian Sexual Hypocrisy Exposed* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), pp. 146-147.
- [54] Henry Arthur Allbutt (1886) *The Wife's Handbook: How a Woman Should Order Herself During Pregnancy, in the Lying-in Room, and after Delivery* (London: W.J. Ramsey), p. 141.
- [55] Deborah Gorham (1982) *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm), p. 68.
- [56] N.J.H. Dent (1989) *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Social and Political Theory* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell), p. 29.
- [57] Nancy Chodorow & Susan Contratto (1982) The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother, in Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom (Eds) *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions* (New York: Longman), pp. 54-75 (p. 64).
- [58] Emily Wortis Leider (1991) *California's Daughter: Gertrude Atherton and Her Times* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), pp. 100, 368, n. 6
- [59] Mary A. Hill (1980) *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Making of a Radical Feminist, 1860-1896* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), p. 233.
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